VELAZQUEZ

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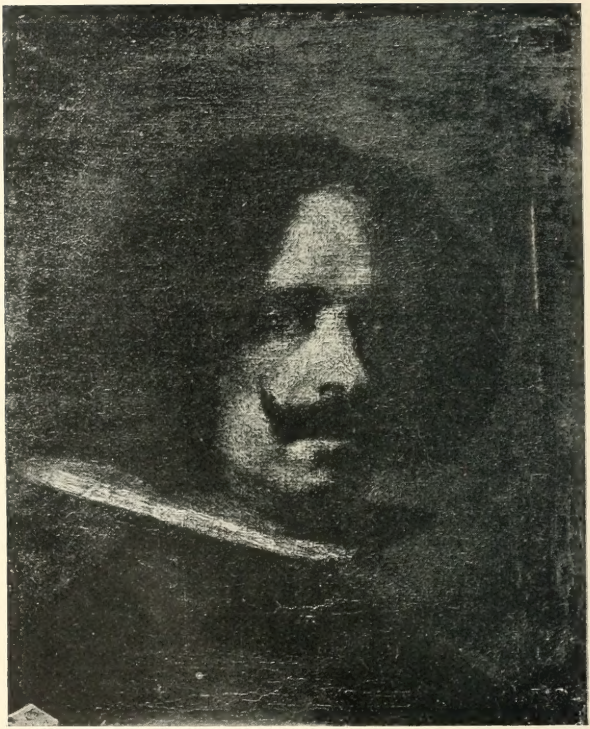

PORTRAIT OF VELAZQUEZ BY HIMSELF

(Gallery of Valencia)

VELAZQUEZ

BY

AUGUSTE BRÉAL

AUTHOR OF "REMBRANDT"

LONDON: DUCKWORTH & CO.

NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO.

Translated from the French text of
M. Auguste Bréal by Madame Simon Bussy.

TURNBULL AND SPEARS, PRINTERS, EDINBURGH.

To

MY WIFE

LOUISETTE BRÉAL

IN MEMORY OF SPAIN

AND

IN THE HOPE OF RETURNING THITHER

Bois-le-Roy, August 1904.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

My very best thanks are due to the translator, Madame Simon Bussy, who has kindly put her knowledge of English at the service of an exacting French text.

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The Photographs reproduced in this volume have been used by the kind permission of Messrs Moreno of Madrid. The original pictures, with the exception of the Frontispiece and the Venus, are now in the Prado Museum.

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Photo—Yeoman.

VENUS AT THE LOOKING-GLASS.

INTRODUCTION

The more one has to do with painting, and the more one knows about and loves it, the more singular does it appear that anyone should write on the work of a painter. A picture is meant to be looked at and cannot be described. This is a truth which the authors of art criticisms do nothing but confirm—sometimes unintentionally.

The more one looks at a picture, the more one feels it as a whole and studies it in detail, the more chimerical does it appear to attempt a "transposition of art," seeking to render by a series of words and by logical argument an almost instantaneous visual impression, of which every part acts simultaneously, and the very nature of which is destroyed by analysis.

To judge, however, by the increasing number of works on painting, it would seem that the public is interested in dissertations on art, and

enjoys descriptions of the beauty of pictures, enriched with commentaries on the reasons of this beauty, strictures on what diminishes it in certain parts, and regrets for what might have increased it in certain others, had it only occurred to the painter.

There exist, indeed, certain volumes on the paintings of the masters so complete and definite that they dispense with the necessity of seeing their works. After reading the books we do not want to see the pictures—we can talk about them. We know how, when, for whom and for what they were painted, whether or no they are authentic, whether they are in the first or third manner or partake of both. We are instructed and fixed in our minds. We know!

In these circumstances the sight of a picture is useless and even hurtful. Nothing is so upsetting to one's opinions on the art of painting as the sight of a picture. Good art critics know this and are on their guard. When, by some chance, they find themselves in front of a picture, they are not put off, but beg to see the back of the canvas, examine the varnish, consult reproductions, give expert

opinions on the signature and recommend a slight cleaning.[1]

Then they go off to write or read. At times they evoke out of their heads the rules of painting of which they do not know the elements; at times they ransack the archives in order to elucidate some question of the protocol in Royal hunting parties. These matters are no doubt interesting from many points of view, but they do not come within our scope. In the following pages there will be found neither a metaphysic of painting, nor a history of Spanish society in the seventeenth century, nor even a biography filled with revelations concerning Velazquez.

The author of this volume has reason to believe that Velazquez has expressed what he had to say by means of pictures which are extremely curious and passionately interesting to look at, for anyone who is at all susceptible to painting. The author is persuaded that the great painters of all time have never desired either to prove or to refute anything

[1] It would be only too easy to give examples. We leave the reader free to make his choice among the authorities with whom he is acquainted.

by their painting, and Velazquez perhaps less than any other.

Painters paint because they want to paint. This may appear paradoxical, but still we believe it to be the case. For them it is neither a sacrifice, nor a duty, nor an honour, nor a holy vocation, but a kind of pleasure. One day, in the presence of Corot, two æsthetes were discussing, with some asperity, the art of painting. He listened to them respectfully, and not without awe. Then, taking his pipe out of his mouth, he said gently, "Painting! Well, it's not as complicated as you make out." And then he went and painted.

This volume is neither a treatise on æsthetics, nor an historical essay, nor a catalogue, nor even a guide-book. We beg the reader not to take it with him if he goes to see any of Velazquez' pictures. This little book is merely an invitation to the journey.

CHAPTER I

Pictures of Velazquez in the galleries of Europe—Their special character—The light of Spain—Realism of Velazquez—Velazquez paints things as he sees them—Impressionism of Velazquez—Rembrandt and Velazquez—The work of Velazquez in the Prado at Madrid—Necessity of going to Spain in order to know Velazquez.

Even in the minds of those people who have not been to Spain, the name of Velazquez evokes the idea of a painter who is unlike any other. After visiting the great galleries of London, Paris, Rome, Florence, Berlin, Vienna and the Hague, one recalls certain strangely life-like figures who, portrayed with a realism one might almost call aristocratic, seem to reign in the rooms where they are placed. They are for the most part the likenesses of kings, princes, or great nobles. But one feels that it is not only their exalted rank which isolates them. The atmosphere which envelopes them is different from that which

is present—or absent—in the works of the Italian, Flemish, French or English masters. The light plays on these personages and on the objects that surround them, with a delicacy, a precision, a kind of lucid calm which makes the twilight gloom of Rembrandt appear theatrical, the brilliance of Rubens brutal, the gold of Titian conventional, and the grace of Vandyck nerveless and uncertain. Beside the canvases of Velazquez all the rest smack of paint and assume an artificial air. And yet the pictures of the Spanish master are far from being mere tricky imitations ; but they present themselves with such tranquil composure, so direct a simplicity, that they dominate the beholder. In each of his works Velazquez seems to say : "This is what I saw and I have painted it." Velazquez lived in a country in which the light is a continual pleasure for a sensitive eye. The air is more immaterial than elsewhere ; there are no fogs imbued with colour, no golden mists ; the light has neither revelations, nor surprises, nor mysteries. It is diffused and omnipresent ; softly hazing only the further distances, the blue of sky and sierras, it irradiates what is near ; the

shadows are transparent, the reflections silvery. It is not the light of a dream, nor yet the light of a fable, it is a light that shows things to us and makes us see them.

In the earliest works of Velazquez one already feels the pleasure he had in seeing the outer world as it is, in its shapes and proportions, its colours and reflections, without a thought of what may be hidden or evoked. Until the last it was this world which the painter's eye beheld and reflected, like a flawless mirror of unrivalled delicacy and silvery limpidity. With advancing years his craft becomes suppler, surer, more masterly. The painter of the early "bodegones"[1] has made himself master of his implement, making it express delicate values and fleeting shades, which at first were beyond the somewhat dry precision of his brush. And the greater his mastery becomes, the closer he keeps to the surface of things. He is not tempted to go below it.

People have seen in Velazquez, and to a certain extent with justice, a precursor of the Impressionists of to-day. But he is not tempted by the chemistry of the "decomposition of

[1] Still life.

tones." He decomposes nothing. And if he is not a chemist, still less is he an alchemist like his contemporary Rembrandt. There is no witchcraft in him. He is not a painter of souls. And yet his portraits are psychological —to the psychologist. If it is true that our inmost feelings and character transpire in our faces, then one can decipher the secret soul of Velazquez' personages, for he painted their outsides with a truth and frankness that no one has equalled. Before a portrait by Rembrandt we can divine his model's character to the extent of imagining how he looked and bore himself in real life. Before a portrait by Velazquez the looks and bearing of the model make us divine his character. An amateur of souls can gather instruction in the eyes of the portraits of Philip IV and scrutinise the mystery of all the features of that living mask, just as a tailor can find in the same portrait documentary evidence as to the cut of his clothes and the shape of his collars. Velazquez is a physiognomist when he paints faces, a tailor when he paints clothes, and a teratologist when he paints dwarfs. He is an eye open on surrounding nature. He is a

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painter in the purest and fullest acceptation of the word.

The country where he lived and painted is also the country one must go to in order to get to know the work of Velazquez. While the pictures of most of the great artists of bygone days are distributed throughout the galleries of Europe, and every capital possesses some of their masterpieces, Velazquez remains, with Franz Hals and Raphael, one of those we must visit in their native land. The galleries of Europe inspire us with the desire of knowing Velazquez. The Prado shows us the artist's complete work. We find him here in his entirety, lighted by the very light which he painted. The country which he figured stretches to the gates of the town. From the terrace of the Palacio Real our eyes travel over the moors of the Casa de Campo, climb in the distance the flanks and snowy peaks of the Sierra de Guadarrama, to lose themselves in the delicate azure, the incomparable light of the sky of Madrid. Without Velazquez we should probably not be able to see this landscape as we see it to-day. Away from this country it is impossible to feel his art fully. Velazquez'

pictures are beautiful reflections, reflections which last. We must go and see them beneath their own sky. Do we not love the images which tremble in the stream the better for knowing we can raise our head and see the trees shiver, the clouds race by and the air clothe itself with different hues?

CHAPTER II

Landscape of Castile. The Escorial and environs of Madrid —Nature and the pictures of Velazquez—Ought Velazquez to teach us to see Velazquez?—The lesson of technique and methods—Concerning the manner of consulting the masters.

When we approach Castile from the North, after crossing the Pyrenees, we get the impression of having penetrated into another continent. It has been said by several writers that Spain belongs more to Africa than to Europe, and in fact the country as one journeys through it has a completely novel character. There is something peculiar in the landscape, something which it would be difficult to define accurately at first, but which penetrates the traveller in every part. One has already seen elsewhere rocks and stones and valleys and barren mountains. Why does this interminable series of rocky slopes and dried up stones, without a blade of grass or a tree, resemble no

other country? Even the villages that catch the sight, sparse and poor and stone-coloured, seem to make one with the expanse, where nothing is distinguishable but the bright lights and sharp shadows of the stones, with the sky showing between them, bathing all things in its limpidity, silvering the granite blocks, and seeming to penetrate to the very depths of the precipices, so transparent are the shadows at their base. As one approaches Madrid the impression increases of savage grandeur, of nakedness, of harshness, of light and of space. Perhaps the sensation grows because it lasts. In any case this flight of the train through great heaps of stone steeped in light, ends by haunting and intoxicating you. Framed in the windows of the carriage, there files before you an astonishing procession of landscapes, made up of great simple lines and successive planes saturated with light; in these play every value and every tone of grey, from the gulfs of shadow to the points which catch the light and which seem to silver the surrounding azure of the sky in which they sparkle.

Then comes the Escorial, the palace-prison built with blocks of mountain, which looks as

if it had been put there to prove that man knows how to make the desert more arid, stones more naked, harshness more hard. The stone cupolas show rounded in the air and curve upon a dazzling sky. No ornament, no relief breaks the infinitely graduated tone of the shadows. The great surfaces of bare wall, the square columns with neither flutings nor capitals, planted abruptly on the pavement, the whole of this architecture, which is as rectilinear as a ray of sun-light, grows light and dark in large masses. But neither in light nor in shadow are we reminded of buildings which we know. The stone is not the stone of our cathedrals nor the marble of the Parthenon. The grey granite with its hard surface, close grain and rather rough texture, absorbs the light without gleam or sparkle, and harmonises wonderfully with the silvery azure of the atmosphere, which seems to have robbed it of a little of its grey, just as in the cool shadows the granite seems to have kept a little of the blue of the sky.

And then at the very gates of Madrid we find the green shades of the woods of the Pardo, the evergreen oaks, the broom, the

moors, the undulating hillocks of the Casa de Campo, where clumps of great trees alternate with pale stretches of grass, heath and bog-myrtle. Let a rider pass by, mounted on one of those Andalusian stallions you may see in the stables of the Caballeriza Real, and you have a Velazquez.

But Velazquez himself is needed. We do not pretend to explain the genius of the master by the natural harmonies of the place where he lived. In that case all Spaniards would be great painters. Genius is a rare accident. We believe that Velazquez would probably have been a great painter if, for instance, he had been brought up from childhood in England. But it is not altogether certain. Probably there would not have been so perfect an adaptation between his genius and his surroundings, and the question of heredity and origins would come into play. The point on which we wish to insist is that in England a man with the genius of Velazquez would have been a *different* painter. This seems a truism, but it is not without importance. We read in the very interesting work which the late Mr Stevenson devoted to Velazquez,

PORTRAIT OF AN UNKNOWN

and in which he studies the influence of the Spanish master on contemporary art, phrases like the following: "Now that he has shown me the way, I can see a Velazquez wherever I please." [1]

Such an assertion, coming from a man who seems to have felt keenly, and who was himself a painter, is surprising. If it is really true that Mr Stevenson was able to see a Velazquez wherever he pleased, it is a pity that he did not paint some of them. He should have been able to, if he had really seen them. The whole life of a painter is nothing but a long apprenticeship of the eye. Manual dexterity in painting—indispensable as it may be—can be acquired. (Very clumsy painters have been very great ones. The lack of skill of a man like Poussin would bring blushes to the cheek of many who manufacture painting nowadays.) If Mr Stevenson, who was a painter and knew what is meant by "seeing," was acquainted with his art well enough to "see a Velazquez wherever he pleased," he ought to have painted masterpieces. Or else he makes us suspect that he means by "a Velazquez" a

[1] "Velazquez," by R. A. M. Stevenson, p. 66.

picture painted in a scale of colours analogous to the scale of colours employed by Velazquez; greys and blacks "à la Velazquez"; more or less liquid paint cleverly put on with "Velazquez' brushes"; in a word, a "pastiche." What is the use, then, of waxing indignant at the tyranny of Italian schools and of artists who are "bandaged by Italian prejudices"? To bring back from Spain a vision "à l'Espagnole," nay, "à la Velazquez," is no less wearisome and no less opposed to true artistic sentiment than all the productions of the Venetians of Munich, the Florentines of London and the Pre-Raphaelites of the twentieth century.

All formulæ, all palette recipes are hateful. We are now assisting at the birth of a stereotyped Impressionism more tedious than all the mechanical repetitions of the past. The pseudo-Renoirs, the Monets for exportation, the Degases by the gross, are the very contradiction of the theories of those masters whom they imitate. To see a Velazquez in England is to see what Velazquez himself would never have seen.

The preparation of paints, the length of brushes, sack-cloth canvas or the composition

of the palette, these are not the things which Velazquez should teach the painters of to-day. If he himself lived at the present time he would no doubt use different methods. It does not seem to us to be much less ridiculous to want to apply Velazquez' methods of expression in other times and other latitudes, than to deck out a little model in studio scraps and exhibit her under the name of "Souvenir of Velazquez." There is in London a salutary example of the painfully ludicrous nature of this kind of imitation.

Technique is indispensable to every artist, and we should ill explain our meaning if we led anyone to suppose that we made little of the technical side of painting. We should rather be tempted to say that in a certain sense technical skill is everything. For it is impossible to distinguish it with exactness from feeling and imagination. When does technique begin in a great artist? Not at the moment of execution. Before executing he has chosen what he wishes to execute. There is technique in the art of choosing. One might even say that art is nothing but the art of choosing. Too often when people speak of craft and

technique they forget that craft is only half of craft, and that it is only worth something when it is the direct expression of original feeling. Unless it is that, it is a mere comedy. People who are satisfied with using the methods of the masters are like play actors who attempt to act without a book. They continually return to the same pantomime or put together an incongruous collection of bits which they have taken here, there and everywhere. The study of the masters' technique is only profitable in so far as it helps us to understand their manner of feeling, and to go back, in a way, to the source of their emotion. To frequent and study great works is of practical value for the education of an artist only from that moment when, in spite of himself and unknown to himself, he diverges from the master he is studying. In reality a man who actually saw a Velazquez wherever he pleased, would be as terrible as a ghost. Velazquez is dead.

All this comes to saying that in order to express ourselves, either well or ill, it is important we should have something to say, and that rhetoric should not consist in acquiring the art of speaking to say nothing. The

learning of prosody is not without its advantages in writing love poems, but there is no learning how to fall in love. And to paint a picture as well as to write a sonnet, one must be in love.

To analyse methods in order to extract formulæ from them is one of the most dangerous occupations that exist, even for artists of the second rank who have no pretentions to being masters. It leads to applying formulæ without feeling them, which is much worse than expressing a feeling that is insufficiently formulated, unskilfully. Great artists who can teach us so many things can teach us also the way in which we should study the masters. It was not in order to produce Signorellis that young Michael Angelo made copies which looked like facsimiles, as is proved by the original drawings he was doing at the same time. However greatly struck Velazquez may have been with the Venetian masters, he never attempted to "borrow" from them their golden atmosphere, nor their composition, nor their colouring. Must we say, then, that he drew no instruction from his voyages to Venice? This would be to

fall into the errors of those writers who say that the visit of Rubens to Madrid had no influence on Velazquez, because the paintings of the Spanish master retain the same character they had before that visit, and in no way resemble "Rubenses." They remain indeed "Velazquezes," that is to say, pictures which were felt before being executed, and are expressions of a direct emotion in the presence of nature. This does not mean that the advice, the conversation, or the works of the Antwerp master had no action on Velazquez. It would be absurd to think that a painter who was so marvellously gifted for plastic and pictorial emotion should have been able to meet an artist like Rubens without increasing the store of his inward treasures, without developing the resources of his sensibility, without adding to his instruction in the deepest meaning of the word. And that too when the artist's very essence is to acquire instruction incessantly, to learn all his life long, as he lives, and because he lives.

CHAPTER III

Birth of Velazquez—His masters—Marriage with Juana Pacheco—Seville—First works—The "bodegones"—Velazquez' drawing—His realism and want of imagination—Velazquez and Rubens—The Picaresque novels—Familiar subjects — Character of Velazquez' first pictures—How he developed his talent.

Velazquez did not go to Madrid before he was about twenty-four years old. He was born at Seville in 1599 and was the son of Don Juan Rodriguez de Silva, the descendant of a great Portuguese family, settled at Seville and of Dona Geronima Velazquez, a native of Seville. The painter's name in full is therefore Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Velazquez. His birth certificate is still preserved in the parish church of San Pedro. Velazquez' parents had him instructed in Latin and philosophy, and do not appear to have opposed his vocation for painting, which he very early showed. It is known that he entered the studio of the painter

Herrera at about the age of thirteen, but soon left in order to become the pupil of Pacheco.

Herrera, a powerful painter, but of a violent and cross-grained disposition, though he may not have had as much influence in his pupil's development as certain people have attributed to him, seems at any rate not to have paralysed him at the outset by a too theoretical instruction. All that is told as to the advice he may have given young Velazquez is necessarily mere conjecture. One detail, however, appears to us not unworthy of notice. One of Herrera's sons became a painter of "bodegones." This seems to show that if Herrera did not deliberately incite his pupils to the direct, immediate and patient observation of nature, he at any rate did not dissuade them from it.

Very different from Herrera was Francisco Pacheco. A highly cultivated man, a writer and a poet, an ardent Latin scholar, an enlightened amateur and a mediocre painter, Pacheco used to receive in his studio all the wits of Seville, and recommend himself as a master by the amenity of his manners. Everything leads us to believe that he must have facilitated Velazquez' start in life more by his

connections than by his advice or example. A fast friendship soon bound him to his illustrious disciple, to whom he gave his daughter, Juana Pacheco, to wife. The marriage was celebrated at Seville in 1618, and Pacheco alludes to it in these words: "After five years' education and instruction I gave him my daughter in marriage, incited thereto by his virtues, his modesty, his fine qualities, and also by the hopes with which his happy disposition and great talent inspired me."[1]

At the beginning of the seventeenth century Seville was in full prosperity. The riches of the West Indies were pouring into it; its commerce was at the height of activity, and though deserving its renown of being the first of catholic cities, it already enjoyed the reputation as a pleasure resort which it still possesses. With a little imagination one can fancy how agreeable a residence it must have been for a young artist. There were walks in the animated streets and on the banks of the Guadalquivir;

[1] "Arte de la Pintura, su antiguedad y grandezas." Seville, 1649. Re-edited by G. Cruzada Villaamil, Madrid, 1886. Two vols. Vol. i. p. 134.

quiet hours spent in the cool "patios," where to this day can be traced that Moorish strain which adds a mysterious oriental touch to the life of Andalusia, impregnating the rhythm of its dances with ardours and languors that are wholly African, and breaking its songs with the cries and wails of the Arab; then there were parties of pleasure in the gardens and suburb of Triana, bouts in the "posadas" and social gatherings in Pacheco's studio.

Historians agree in saying that we possess no portraits by Velazquez belonging to this period of his life. This is a mistake. We do possess some, but they are portraits of plates, of eggs, of pestles and mortars, of glasses and jugs, of poultry and game lying on kitchen tables. Some of these pictures were to be seen at the Spanish Exhibition at the Guildhall in 1902. They are painted with incomparable application and sincerity. The artist is possessed with so great a desire to study his models in their completeness, that he often cannot make up his mind to let them even partially hide each other, so that he arranges them alongside each other in a row, spread out in an odd and extremely ingenuous fashion.

The composition may be said to be non-existent; if dwelt upon, it would be found at times to be shocking and absurd. The painter, however, was not preoccupied with this. He wanted to paint, to be able to apply himself to painting. To this end he chose models which sit well and are never tired, models which can be studied with perseverance, with obstinacy and in silence—things.

In his early works one quality is already visible to an extraordinary degree—perfection of drawing. As a draughtsman Velazquez is always prodigious, impeccable, amazing. It seems as if he had always known how to draw. His eye is infallible. No foreshortening puts him out, he has no hesitation as regards place, volume or form; he has the precision of a well-constructed machine. The power of Velazquez' drawing is such that it attracts our attention no more than the drawing of the things one sees in nature. We possess, however, very few drawings or sketches by Velazquez (four or five); and we have every reason to believe that he sketched in his pictures directly on to the canvas without making a separate drawing. This explains the

repaintings we can see in some of his pictures where he has modified the first sketch, which now shows through the later painting. These repaintings and retouchings show a correction, or a modification, or a change of place in the composition of the picture, never a hesitation or an error in the drawing. *In the presence* of the model Velazquez is never in difficulties with his drawing, his realism is never at a loss. Such are the qualities of his eye; his drawing is seen, observed, felt, never known by heart, never done "de chic." Velazquez would have been quite incapable of producing whole figures out of his imagination, far less whole groups. When he cannot base it on direct and immediate observation, his infallible drawing fails. It is impossible to make a galloping horse "pose," especially full face and close to—the horse on which little *Baltazar Carlos* (see p. 125) is mounted has a body like an Easter egg, into which are stuck two stiff and unlifelike hind-legs; on the other hand, the details of the head, the fore-quarters and the harness, of everything which could be studied at leisure in the riding school, the paddock or the stable, are perfect.

Velazquez is wanting in imagination to a degree which it is almost impossible to conceive in relation to a master. He is incapable of inventing *anything*. In this respect he is as different as possible from a man like Rubens, for instance, who is constantly run away with by his creative impulse. In the Prado there is a copy by Rubens of one of Titian's pictures representing Adam and Eve. Rubens, no doubt, admired this picture highly. Some portions of the copy are executed with a fidelity and, at the same time, a mastery which are incomparable; others, no less beautiful, with an infidelity which is extremely amusing. The Italian Adam has become Flemish; rosy blood flows in his veins and shines through his skin; he still resembles Titian's model in his general attitude, but the movement is *slightly* altered though it still remains correct. Rubens has amused himself by *slightly* altering the movement almost without thinking of it—and by adding a large red parrot! To do this he has not had recourse to a living model; he has let himself be borne along by Titian's original and by his own abundance. He *knows* what produces such or such a movement of the

muscles, and he indicates it calmly and with a fine assurance. He performs "tours de force" of this kind constantly and as an amusement. Velazquez neither can nor wants to do so; and this very weakness of imagination is his strength. In order to paint the jug of *Menippus* (see p. 197), he must have a real jug; to get the reflection on *Æsop's* (see p. 195) bucket, he must have a bucket lighted in a particular manner. When he makes a replica of one of his portraits, the replica is the exact reproduction of the original. But the power of his realism is such, that it makes us perceive at once what is unreal in the "creations" of others. Beside the folds of Velazquez' stuffs, Rubens' draperies look windy and conventional. There is no rhetoric in Velazquez. He says things quite simply, but in such a fashion that it is terribly dangerous to improvise or to recite when he is near.

With this genius for direct observation, this love of the "document," as the realists of our day would say, it was only natural that young Velazquez should take the subjects for his first pictures from the things around him. In the very year of the painter's birth had appeared

HEAD OF A WOMAN, SOMETIMES CALLED A SIBYL

one of the first and best of the picaresque novels, "Guzman de Alfarache," by the Sevillian, Mateo Aleman. It was in a kindred vein of popular observation. The fashion for this style of novel, in which specimens of the lower dregs of Spanish society disport themselves, was begun by Mendoza in his "El Lazarillo de Tormes" (1533). This was followed by Perez de Leon's "La Picara Justina" (1605), by Vicente Espinel's "Marcos de Obregon" (1615), and by a whole series of tales in whose pages the frequenters of "posadas" and all the rag-tag and bobtail of the mendicant classes live and swarm.

The public who read these works was not surprised to see a painter choose for his subject a water carrier or an old woman frying eggs. It was, moreover, the custom to enliven "bodegones" by introducing figures. The absurd expression "natures mortes" is more foolish than ever when applied to these pictures which usually represent kitchen scenes or other episodes in the life of the common people. At the exhibition at the Guildhall were shown *The Water Carrier of Seville* and the *Old Woman frying Eggs*, as well as others of these "bodegones," among which should be counted *Christ*

in the House of Martha and Mary (National Gallery), which is in reality merely an interior.

In these pictures, and in others of the same period, we still find the same faultless and well-grounded drawing, and the same diligent and almost painfully elaborate execution. Figures and objects are rendered in exactly the same manner and are neither more nor less alive. Every fold of the skin is, as it were, etched in with the searching point of the engraver; the smallest features are conscientiously defined and outlined, and the figures, correct as they are, stand out against the dark backgrounds without any sort of suppleness. Velazquez has taken the models that came to his hand, and has studied them to the extent of petrifying every movement. (The same "muchacho" appears in the *Water Carrier* and in the *Old Woman frying Eggs*, and the same old woman figures in the latter picture and in *Christ in the House of Martha.*)

Whilst the most remarkable characteristics of Velazquez' masterpieces are a marvellous ease of execution, an extraordinary suppleness in the manipulation of paint and values of an almost ethereal subtlety, his first works show

a laboured stiffness, a hardness of execution amounting to heaviness and an absence of enveloping atmosphere, which would seem to be the signs of a complete difference of temperament between the painter who applied his rigid and leathery figures against a black background and the incomparable artist who steeped in air and light the delicate and transparent faces of the Infantas. Velazquez is a perfect example of what dexterity and craftsmanship ought to be in a master, namely the outcome of sincere and protracted study. The painter who later on was able to indicate with a single touch—fleeting and decisive—a belt buckle, a sword hilt, the ribbon of a hoop, and the very life of a glance, began by meticulously elaborating portraits of pots and by patiently painting in every line of a model's grimace. Little by little, alone and by himself, he acquired and amassed the experience which is represented by a single trickle of paint in *Las Meninas*. Never has more audacious synthesis been preceded by more careful analysis. This might furnish a subject of meditation for those young "masters" who start by audacities, which are all the easier

for being unconscious. It is impossible to synthesize, it is impossible to epitomize (in painting), what one has not studied. If one begins by the end one is in danger of ending by the beginning ; and if early works that are laboured do not imply future mastery, early works that are masterly are the manifestation of an artist without personality. The history of the great masters is an ever-fresh illustration of this truth. Velazquez shows us both the starting-point and the complete development of the rarest gifts.

CHAPTER IV

Religious pictures executed at Seville—Accession of Philip IV.—Velazquez goes to Madrid—Is appointed Painter to the King—His career and situation at Court—The Andalusian character—The dwarfs and jesters—The portraits of Philip IV.

Works like the *Water Carrier* were liked and appreciated as soon as they appeared. At the same time, thanks, no doubt, to the protection and influence of Pacheco, Velazquez received commissions for several religious pictures intended for some of those convents with which the piety of Philip III. ("el tercero santo") was filling the city. These pictures are all painted like the "bodegones"; it is only the subject that is changed. *The Adoration of the Magi* (see p. 5) in the Prado dates from this period. It shows the same certainty, the same painstaking drawing, the same rigidity of execution and the same uncompromising realism. The Virgin is a woman of Seville, the Child a

Spanish baby, and the negro comes from the harbour on the Guadalquivir. The figures are dressed in the conventional draperies, which have been scrupulously studied in the hard top-light of a studio. The whole thing, the faces as well as the materials, is dry and precise. The robust and finely drawn hands of the Virgin could easily manage a far heavier weight than the Child which she is holding on her knee, a little doll-like creature wrapped round after the fashion of a cocoon. In the archiepiscopal palace of Seville there is another picture painted by Velazquez at this period, the *Virgin surrounded by Angels giving the Chasuble to St Ildefonse*. The same characteristics can be recognised in it, notwithstanding the bad condition of the canvas. St Ildefonse, whose head is as lean as a skeleton's, is probably the portrait of some ecclesiastic. As for the angels, they can be met with to this day at no great distance from the cigarette factory. The same holds good of a *St Peter* seated on a rock. He is a patiently painted studio figure, for whom an old sunburnt peasant has served as model. All these pictures (a *Christ at Emmaus* also) are lighted in the same

way by a top-light on the painter's left. They were painted in the same studio and in the same place. The *Portrait of an Unknown* (see p. 13), which is in the Prado, also dates from this period. If one compares the head of this portrait, which looks as if it had been carved in boxwood and its ruff cut out of tinfoil, with a portrait like that of *Don Antonio el Ingles* (see p. 183), for instance, which was painted thirty years later, one can realise what progress the artist has made and how he has achieved his freedom.

Velazquez was twenty-two years old and the father of two little girls when Spain was stirred by the unexpected death of Philip III. (1621), and by the change of favourites, courtiers and placemen that accompanies a new reign. Sevillians might hope to be well received at the new Court. The young eighteen-year-old King's favourite and "Gentilhombre de Camara," the Conde d'Olivares, was of Sevillian origin, and had lived at Seville. Velazquez was advised to go to Madrid to seek the favour of the King.

A first visit in 1621 did not succeed, but the attempt was repeated in 1623. This time

Pacheco travelled with his son-in-law. Velazquez had been recommended to Olivares, who even allowed him fifty ducats[1] for his travelling expenses.

On his arrival at Madrid, Velazquez painted a portrait of Fonseca, the King's Usher. This portrait was the admiration of all who were allowed to behold it. Hardly was it finished when it was taken to the palace, where the whole royal family came to look at it, and it was decided that Velazquez should paint the sovereign's picture. On the 30th August 1623 the King began to sit for a life-size equestrian portrait. "Everything was painted from nature, and the landscape as well."[2] It was a complete success, and everyone congratulated Velazquez. Olivares declared that it was "the first real portrait of the King which had been painted, that all the former ones should be removed from the palace, and Velazquez alone henceforth have the right of painting His Majesty"; and he ordered the painter to take up his

[1] The ducat was at that time worth about 2s. 2½d.

[2] Pacheco. "Arte de la pintura," i. 134 and *seq.*

abode in Madrid. On the 6th October 1623 Velazquez was appointed Painter to the King, with a salary of twenty ducats a month, besides diverse extra remunerations, of which three hundred ducats "ayuda de costa" made part, with later on (in 1626) a rise of three hundred ducats in his salary. Pacheco was appointed secretary, and Velazquez had a studio in the palace itself. These conditions were much more favourable than any that had been granted to the painters preceding Velazquez in the King's service. Some years before, the painter Gonzales had been given the appointment with a salary of sixteen ducats a month and with no extra remuneration for his works.

With his official appointment began that uninterrupted connection, which, during thirty-seven years, closely bound the life of the painter to that of the King. Their relations soon became entirely friendly. Philip IV. had his own arm-chair reserved for him in the artist's studio. He could find his way to it at any hour of the day or night, for he had the keys of every apartment in the palace, and no day went by without his paying Velazquez

a visit. Pacheco considers this familiarity "almost incredible."[1]

While, according to their turn of mind, some of the authors who have written about Velazquez admire the rapidity with which he gained the good graces of the King and the manner in which the latter honoured his painter with every kind of distinction—Usher of the Chamber in 1627, beneficiary of the "paso de vara d'alguacil" in 1633, Officer of the Wardrobe in 1634, Groom of the King's Chamber in 1643, Inspector of Buildings in 1647, Grand Marshal of the Palace or Purveyor ("aposentador") in 1652, and Knight of Santiago in 1659—some, on the other hand, deplore a state of things which put Velazquez in the position of a subordinate. They recall that in 1636 Velazquez is obliged to make a claim for about £160 due to him as salary, and that he is in "great difficulties"; that in 1640 he reiterates his demand and is promised a sum on account, payable in monthly instalments; finally, that he appears in the Court registers among

[1] "No es creible la liberalidad y agrado con que est ratado de un tan gran monarca," Pacheco, i. 139.

the dwarfs, jesters and barbers of the Palace.[1]

We think it probable that Velazquez did not consider himself either neglected or unlucky. He was doubtless sufficiently contented with his lot. By what we learn from some of his letters, and by what we can guess from his pictures, we are led to suppose that he was calm by nature, a little indolent, and probably somewhat careless in the everyday affairs of life. To men of northern climes, the inhabitants of Andalusia are a perpetual surprise.

[1] Amongst others, a list has been published, dated 15th September 1637, giving the names of the dwarfs, jesters, musicians, barbers, etc. . . . to whom were given "clothes of grace" ("vestidos de merced)." We read in this list that the "clothes of the barbers and of Diego Velazquez may be reduced to eighty ducats and those of the officials of the Wardrobe to seventy." (Cruzada Villaamil. *Op. cit.* p. 102.) In the list of the places assigned to the spectators of a bull-fight which took place in the Plaza Mayor in 1643, Velazquez is put in the fourth tier with the servants of the grandees, the barbers of the palace and other underlings. (A. Rodriguez Villa. "La Corte y Monarquia de España en los anos de 1636 y 1637." Madrid, 1886.)

Their tranquillity, their apparent immobility, can be instantaneously transformed into the swiftest agility, and that without any excitement or loss of balance. At times one is reminded of the release of a spring, only that that image implies a previous tension, and here there is no such thing. They are inactive, but able to act; and their torpor seems to be not so much lethargy as absence of activity. These people who scarcely think do not give one the impression of stupidity. One feels, as it were, a reserve of latent force about them, treasures of life which are unused, or else spilled in a moment; a kind of animal health which contrasts overpoweringly with the recollections of nervous overstrain or bestial stolidity left by other countries. There is nothing one does not see in a new light when one gets into Andalusia, including even the ferocity of a tyrannical religion and the sanguinary horrors of bull-fights. They are different beings, and are what they are without being troubled about it, without misgivings and without desiring to change. They have an unreasoning confidence in themselves and in life. If we attempt to understand them,

we soon perceive that they do not return the compliment; if we try to put ourselves in their place, they, on their side, do nothing of the sort. They are not idealists, but realists; when they look, when they observe, they are entirely dominated by the impression of the moment, and make no attempt to imagine anything beyond. The same unreasoning instinct impels them to seek out spectacles of blood and murder, which gratify their eyes and procure them an obscure irritation of the senses — "auto-da-fés," bull-fights and Holy Week processions through churches where the crucifixes look like actual corpses; in these customs, as well as in their songs and dances, we feel the ardour of a fiery nature, an exuberance of animal life which must expend itself, and a want of imagination which prevents the spectator from realising the sufferings of the agonised beast or tortured man.[1]

[1] A young Spanish painter was describing the beauty of the colours, the life and the attraction of a bull-fight. When we mentioned the animal's horrible death, "Ah!" said he, "it's true; the bull is killed — I never noticed it." There was no affectation in his answer—he had seen nothing but tones and values and movements.

Which of us can look at the atrocious and admirable series of Velazquez' portraits of dwarfs without a pang? How was it that an artist so sensistive to beauty did not flee from the sight of so frightful an object as the Niño de Vallecas (see p. 187), the idiot dwarf whose nasal whine we almost seem to hear? Far from fleeing, Velazquez painted him with care and pleasure, just as he would have painted a pretty woman—without a thought.

Velazquez painted dwarfs because he knew them, because they were familiar objects. The taste for being surrounded by these wretched creatures, deformed, idiotic and hydrocephalous, raged at the Court of Madrid even more than in the other royal houses of Europe. One may say to-day, without fear of being prosecuted for high treason, that Velazquez painted these monsters just as he painted Philip IV., their august master—and his, the sovereign whose features are more familiar to us than those of any other.

Velazquez, Painter to the King, did not cease studying the royal face till the day of his death, and he has left us many unforgettable representations of it. From the beardless

PORTRAIT OF KING PHILIP IV

youth, whom we see in the two portraits of the Prado (see p. 45 and p. 49), to the man of over fifty, whom we can contemplate in the National Gallery, every stage of his life, every modification of his character, every trace of progressive fatigue, the coarsening of the features, the fading and dulling of the blue eyes, the thinning of the hair as it recedes from the temples, the falling in of the mouth, the gradual protrusion of the jaw, which never ceases, and is as significant and documentary as a chapter of history—in a word, everything that the eye of a painter could see, has been transmitted to us with an unwearying fidelity, a striking veracity and a more and more consummate art.

The oldest in date of the known portraits of the King is probably No. 1071 of the Prado (see p. 45). It is possibly the study for the great portrait (now lost) which procured Velazquez his appointment as Painter to the King. Philip IV. is eighteen years old, his long face, grave and empty, wears a distant and reserved expression. His hair is rolled up over his forehead, and falls in two curls over his ears. The young monarch already

wears the "golilla," or stiff collar, which he invented as a reaction from the luxury of large lace collars and goffered ruffs. There is still something childish in all the features, something irremediably undecided The face is already treated with much less hardness than the early works, but the cuirass and scarf, which are brushed in with spirit and broadly painted, have evidently been added by Velazquez at a much later period. Velazquez often repainted his old canvases. In the full-length portrait of Philip IV. in the National Gallery, which must have been executed seven or eight years after the one we have just mentioned, the King was first depicted in hunting costume; this becomes easily apparent on a close examination of the canvas. The white stockings, the gala dress, the silver ornaments and the felt hat with feathers in it, all examples of rapid and skilful brush-work, were painted in later on.

The full-length portrait of the King (No. 1070 in the Prado; see p. 49) must have been painted the same year or the year after the half-length portrait with the cuirass.[1] The

[1] No. 1071; see p. 45.

PORTRAIT OF KING PHILIP IV

v*d*

head is exactly the same, but a little thinner, and with the hair already slightly sparser on the temples. The picture, the composition of which is all in long lines, is austere and haughty. The King, his head three-quarters turned towards the spectator, is standing in an attitude Velazquez was often to repeat. (The head is in identically the same position as that of the portrait with the cuirass, of which the artist has certainly made use.) The canvas, which is long and narrow, is filled by the figure, which looks extremely tall, although the whole height is barely seven heads. The hands are painted with great elaboration; we shall see how Velazquez was able to indicate the hands in some of his later pictures. Here they are as highly finished as the face. When, after going through the series of pictures in which Velazquez has portrayed the King at full length or half length, on horseback, in armour, in hunting costume, or in Court dress, we return to this first portrait, we are astonished to find how well and how clearly the painter saw what there was to be seen from the very beginning. The likeness is surprising—we may talk of likeness, for after a visit to the Prado we feel

as though we had been long acquainted with Philip IV., the king who did nothing by which to survive in the memory of men, unless it were to have shown some taste for art, and to have been the contemporary of Velazquez.

CHAPTER V

Portraits of Olivares and the Infant Don Carlos—Rivalry of Velazquez and the Italian Court painters—*The Expulsion of the Moors*—Arrival of Rubens at Madrid—His relations with Velazquez—His influence on Velazquez.

It was in great part the powerful influence of Olivares which brought Velazquez to the Court, and the friendship between the favourite and the artist continued unbroken to the end. Velazquez remained faithful to Olivares after his disgrace, and painted numerous portraits of the Count-Duke. The Prado possesses only the great equestrian portrait (see p. 147), of which we shall speak later on, but at the Guildhall Exhibition portraits of Olivares were shown dating from the early days of Velazquez' stay at Madrid. The fierce, imperious and curiously rugged features are very characteristic of the man who acquired such an absolute dominion over the young King. The drawing is superb, and though the execu-

tion is still a little hard, the strength of the whole is great and imprints the countenance of the fiery and ambitious courtier on one's memory. Velazquez also did a bust of Olivares in grisaille, which was engraved by Paul Pontius. Rubens designed a setting for this engraving. The contrast between Velazquez' incisive realism and Rubens' somewhat windy allegories is amusing.

The full-length portrait of the Infant Don Carlos (see p. 55), Philip IV.'s younger brother, who died at the age of twenty-five, also dates from this period. The young prince, who, like his royal brother, was kept at a distance from public affairs by Olivares, is represented in Court dress with the Order of the Golden Fleece round his neck. He has a strong family resemblance to Philip IV.; his face, which is in the same position as the King's in his portraits (Velazquez took no trouble to vary his attitudes), is something sadder and a trifle disdainful. His right hand, placed like Philip's and in almost the same position, is dangling a glove by one finger. We feel that Velazquez is entirely taken up with transcribing the features of his model, and does not seek after originality of arrangement in his

PORTRAIT OF THE INFANT DON CARLOS

early State portraits. He paints his personage as the courtiers may have seen him, in an attitude prescribed, so to speak, by tradition and Court etiquette. The portraits, intentionally, resemble each other; they are not merely portraits of an individual, but also of a dynasty. They are reserved, and will not reveal the secret of what is passing behind those brows, so nearly similar, but of which one alone was born to wear the crown. What thoughts stir or sleep beneath that immovable mask? We may ask the question, but Velazquez will not answer. He shows us only what was shown to him; it was all he needed to make a fine picture.

The rising glory of the Sevillian painter was not without giving umbrage to some of his fellow-artists who had preceded him at the Court. Among these, three Italians, Carducho, Caxesi and Nardi, did their utmost to frustrate the success of Velazquez, which in their eyes appeared too brilliant. In his Dialogues on Painting[1] Carducho makes a wholesale on-

[1] "Dialogos de la pintura, su defensa y origen," etc. Vincencio Carducho, 1633; re-edited at Madrid in 1865 by G. Cruzada Villaamil.

slaught on naturalism and realism, and on those painters who paint kitchen scenes or "bodegones," taking as models and faithfully depicting common people, gamblers and drunkards. He attacks painters who are wanting in imagination, who neither know nor practise the rules of invention and composition, and are only able to paint portraits, etc., etc. This matter was not entirely one of principles or schools, nor were Carducho's attacks merely theoretical; they were aimed at the young Court painter newly arrived from Seville. It is even related that the King, to whose knowledge had been brought the criticisms formulated by the "painters of the chamber," said one day to Velazquez that people reproached him with knowing only how to paint heads. The artist replied coolly: "The gentlemen who say so do me great honour; for my part I am acquainted with no one who knows how to paint them well."

As, however, all this Court chatter, these criticisms and insinuations, increased and became troublesome, it occurred to someone, perhaps to Velazquez himself, to propose a kind of competition, an artistic tournament

between the painters. In any case, the King chose a subject which his four painters, Carducho, Caxesi, Nardi and Velazquez, had to illustrate on canvases of equal dimensions (nine feet high by fifteen wide). The subject given was *The Expulsion of the Moors* in the reign of Philip III. For the sake of greater impartiality the jury was half Italian and half Spanish, being composed of the Roman painter and architect Crescenzi and the Toledan Mayno, a pupil of El Greco's and Philip IV.'s former drawing master. We know Velazquez' picture only through Palomino's description. "In the centre of the picture we see King Philip III. in full armour, holding his baton of command and pointing to a weeping crowd of men, women and children who are being led off by soldiers; in the distance are chariots, and the sea with ships on it; on the King's right hand, Spain, represented as a majestic woman armed in the Roman style, is seated at the foot of a monument: in her right hand she holds a shield and lance and in her left some ears of corn." This is probably the only allegory Velazquez ever painted. He was proclaimed victor. It is believed the picture

was destroyed with many others in the fire of the Alcazar in 1734.

The competition for the picture of *The Expulsion of the Moors* took place in 1627. Towards the autumn of the following year, Rubens arrived at Madrid. He was entrusted with a diplomatic mission relating to the conclusion of peace between Spain and England. At the same time he brought with him eight pictures as an offering to Philip IV. The dispatch of an artist as diplomatic negotiator was not accepted without some demur at the Court of Spain. We have already seen that the etiquette of that Court did not assign a very exalted rank to painters. In a letter of Philip IV.'s dated 15th June 1627, the King complains "that such important matters should be confided to a painter . . . to a man of such an inferior position." [1] But on receiving the assurance that the negotiations should be continued by "persons of importance" in case of the affair being once well started, the Court of Madrid raised no further objections.

Rubens was fifty-one years old, in the full maturity of his powers and at the height

[1] "De tan pocas obligaciones."

of his glory. He had travelled throughout Europe and everywhere had been received by kings, princes, and great personages whose portraits he had painted. His reputation was immense. We can imagine that this visit did not leave Velazquez indifferent. We know that during the nine months he passed at Madrid, Rubens resided at the Palace, that he painted several portraits of Philip IV., and that the King used to come "nearly every day" to visit him. We also know that Velazquez was specially commissioned by the King to entertain Rubens and show him everything he might wish to see. The two artists, who had already exchanged letters, passed much of their time together and made excursions to the environs of Madrid, to the Escorial and in the Sierras.

An intimacy of nine months between Velazquez at the beginning of his career and Rubens in the full force of his maturity! A fine subject, if ever there were one, for critics and writers! And, indeed, the question of Rubens' influence on Velazquez has been discussed in many works which treat of the Spanish master. Some consider this influence

exceedingly pronounced; according to them, Rubens' arrival marks the end of Velazquez' first manner and the beginning of his second. He decides to paint from the nude on the advice of the Flemish master, and at the same time modifies his colouring and technique. The picture of the *Topers—Los Borrachos*—(see p. 73) which was painted during Rubens' stay, under the eyes and with the guidance of the Antwerp master, is the first of a new period, etc., etc. Others point out, adducing proofs to support their statement (the picture of *Los Borrachos,* for instance), that Rubens had no influence on Velazquez, because nothing can be more different from the manner of the Flemish master than the Spanish painter's style. They even put words into the latter's mouth and imagine that he "obeyed an intuition of genius which opened his eyes to the abyss which separated him from Rubens; if he compared his style and creations with those of his great contemporary he must have exclaimed: "Go thy way; continue to dazzle mankind with the astonishing harmonies of thy marvellous colouring; I will not let myself be seduced by such magic conceptions; I will pursue my own

path; I will accentuate my manner; I will assert what I feel and what I desire; I will go as far as my life, my perseverance and my genius will permit!" [1] Others again are embarrassed because *Los Borrachos*, although painted under the influence of the second manner, is nevertheless executed in the style of the first, etc., etc.

Those who have been to Madrid, who appreciate Velazquez and who reflect without prejudice or preconceived theory, must be considerably perplexed by these successive manners which, it seems, have to be discovered and defined in an artist whose evolution was gradual, who developed progressively and who

[1] "Obéissant à une intuition géniale qui lui fit entrevoir l'abime qui le séparait de Rubens, s'il compara son style et ses créations à ceux de son grand contemporaire il dut s'écrier: Suis ton chemin, continue à éblouir les hommes par les étonnantes harmonies de ton merveilleux coloris: je ne me laisse pas séduire par de si magiques conceptions, je suivrai ma voie, j'accentuerai ma manière, j'affirmerai ce que je sens et veux, j'irai aussi loin que me le permettront la vie, ma persévérance et mon génie!"—De Beruete, "Velazquez," Paris, 1898, p. 42.

grew great just as he lived, evenly and steadily. They might enquire, moreover, where, in the history of art, has been seen a master, that is to say an original creator, who has begun at thirty years old to imitate someone else? They will, however, also say to themselves that Velazquez must have been singularly obtuse, deprived indeed of all artistic feeling, if an intimacy of nine months with a genius like Rubens had had no action on his development.

Let us try to imagine Velazquez as he was in 1628. He had reached the age of twenty-nine, was painter to the King and admired for the truth and resemblance of his portraits. Though familiar with many of the best works of the Italian masters at Madrid, and already acquainted with some exceedingly fine pictures by Rubens, he had never yet attempted to imitate either the former or the latter. He did not seek for novelty but for reality, and, in his portraits, it was only by his extreme fidelity of observation that he left the beaten track. He lived at the palace in an atmosphere of routine, where everything was ordered by a glacial etiquette, at a Court where the principal pleasures were hunting

and bull-fights. An implacable religion held men's minds in a vice; the King, his usual model, was a dreary, colourless being, frozen into a posture and already marked by the growing lethargy of Spanish decadence. Velazquez was married, with a home and family; he was not easily disposed to find life tedious nor inclined to have misgivings; he would have been capable of living all his life peacefully at Madrid, of following the movements of the Court and painting likenesses of Royal personages and courtiers, with now and then perhaps a religious picture or an "occasional" decoration. As a matter of fact he did little else.

But it would be impossible to assert that Velazquez would have been the marvellous artist, the painter of genius that he became, if, at the moment when a facile success might have kept him stationary at Madrid, he had not had the stimulus, the intellectual spur of Rubens' visit. First and foremost, the prodigious activity of the Antwerp master must have been an object of admiration, or at any rate of astonishment for Velazquez; Pacheco has left us some precious information

on this point, information derived probably from Velazquez himself.

"During the nine months which he spent at Madrid, without neglecting his important affairs, and notwithstanding the gout from which he suffered for some time, he painted a great deal, so vast are his skill and facility. In the first place he painted half-length portraits of the King, Queen and Infanta, in order to take them back to Flanders. He painted five portraits of His Majesty, of which one was on horseback, amongst other figures, showing great mastery ("valentia"). He then painted a rather longer than half-length portrait of the Infanta de las Descalzas (a convent of barefooted nuns) of which he made several replicas. He executed five or six portraits of private people. He copied all the Titians in the King's possession, namely: *The Two Baths,*[1] *Europa, Venus and Adonis, Venus and Cupid, Adam and Eve,* etc., and the portraits of the Landgrave, of the Duke of Saxony, of the Dukes of Alba and of Cobos, of a Doge of Venice, and many other pictures besides those which the King possesses. He

[1] Of Diana.

also copied the full-length portrait of King Philip II.[1] in armour. He made some alterations in his picture of *The Adoration of the Magi* which is in the palace; he painted for Don Diego Megia, one of his great admirers, a *Conception* two varas[2] high, and a life size *St John the Evangelist* for Don Jaime de Cardenas, brother to the Duke of Maqueda. It seems incredible that in so short a time and with so many affairs in hand, he should have been able to produce so many pictures.

"He had few dealings with painters, with the exception of my son-in-law, with whom he had already exchanged letters, and with whom he formed a friendship. He pronounced a very favourable opinion on the subject of his works and his modesty. They visited the Escorial together.

"In short, during the whole time he spent at the Court, His Majesty and the principal ministers showed the greatest consideration for his person and talents, and His Majesty honoured him with the post of Secretary to

[1] By Titian.

[2] A vara is about the equivalent of a French metre.

the Privy Council of the Court at Brussels, for his own life, and with the right of transferring it by inheritance to his son Albert. This post brings in a thousand ducats a year. At the end of his mission, when he took leave of His Majesty, the Count-Duke, in the King's name, presented him with a ring worth a thousand ducats." [1]

Rubens' activity, which was prodigious in the eyes of all, must have been particularly striking to Velazquez, who knew what the art of painting means, and who himself produced little. He must have considered it a unique and extraordinarily interesting spectacle. The hours he spent with Rubens were fruitful beyond all others. We do not mean to say that he drew inspiration from Rubens' manner of working, or that he borrowed his methods or receipts; but the mere sight of such creative power was in itself instruction and encouragement. We know, moreover, that Rubens appreciated Velazquez highly. We can imagine that Velazquez, who had never left Spain, must have delighted in the conversation of a man who had seen every painter and every

[1] Pacheco, "Arte de la Pintura," i. 132.

picture gallery in Europe. But when that man was Rubens, we can imagine not only the thrilling fascination of these talks, but their decisive importance. And, on the other hand, may we not be sure that Rubens, who was a connoisseur, must have laid to heart the desire of completely arousing the genius he divined in Velazquez? Out of the generosity and abundance of a nature prodigal of all its riches, the Flemish master must have enjoyed urging Velazquez on and inciting him to live his life and go forth into the world. He must have spoken to him of the Italian schools and of all that Venice and Rome could teach an artist. He must have inspired him with the desire of not confining himself to one species of painting, of not remaining a fixture in a Court where the finest gifts were in danger of being atrophied, deadened, lost. At that most dangerous of all moments—the end of early youth—when, after the first flame, so many artists live on what they know and go on repeating themselves till their decline, Rubens urges Velazquez to come out of himself, persuades him to change his surroundings and visit fresh fields. This awakening, this call, this re-kindling of

curiosity, this enfranchisement from the bonds of etiquette and habit, this deliverance from all that was threatening to enslave Velazquez —this was the effect of Rubens' visit, and it was no slight thing.

During Rubens' stay, Velazquez painted *Los Borrachos ;* in the spring of 1629, Rubens left Madrid ; a few months later, on the 10th August 1629, Velazquez embarked at Barcelona for Venice and Rome. Such was the influence of Rubens: he did not give Velazquez a new palette, but a new life.

CHAPTER VI

Los Borrachos—Departure for Italy—Venice—The Venetian school—El Greco—Rome—The Villa Medici—The landscapes in the Prado Gallery—*The Forge of Vulcan*—The atmosphere in Velazquez' pictures—Journey to Naples—*Portrait of the Infanta Maria*—Return to Madrid.

The celebrated picture of *Los Borrachos* (see p. 73), which was probably painted during Rubens' visit, and the subject of which—so called mythological—was perhaps chosen under the influence of the illustrious visitor, is, truth to say, a "tavern scene" on a large scale, with a number of figures and some pieces of nude. The picture is of great interest and extraordinary realism. The drawing is intensely alive; the painting, which has many fine qualities, still preserves a certain stiffness. The composition is strange and awkward; we see before us a set of ne'er-do-weels engaged in drinking and evidently "posing" in a studio in

the hard light we already know (the landscape in the background has been added later, while the figures, which are violently lighted from the left, were painted indoors), and a nude Bacchus, who is draped in the classic manner, and is an admirable and brilliant piece of academic painting. The frigidity of the whole; the clumsiness which preponderates notwithstanding the perfection of each detail; these ragamuffins and ruffians who are laughing like so many country bumpkins in front of a travelling photographer's camera; all this medley of science and constraint, of realistic composition, of accurate observation and factitious grouping, produces the most curious impression. Taken separately, each figure is, in a way, a masterpiece, a definitive study, executed with certainty and with absolute and lifelike exactitude. But the assemblage of all these powerful "studies in expression" on one and the same canvas is entirely arbitrary. The figures, though in a certain sense they are so much alive, kill each other by the very care with which the details of life are imitated in each. It does not give the impression of a whole. The eye passes from one to the other

LOS BORRACHOS (THE TOPERS)

and dwells here and there, but is unable to take in the scene at a glance. A picture which has thus been painted in pieces, resolves itself into pieces when the spectator looks at it. Here, as in his early "bodegones," as in his religious pictures, as later on in *Las Lanzas*, in *Las Hilanderas*, in *Las Meniñas*, as in all his works, Velazquez has painted portraits or a series of portraits. But he has not yet learnt to connect them, if not by the pattern, at any rate by the atmosphere of the picture. The models are stuck one beside the other, and are neither lighted by the light nor bathed in the vibrating undulations of enveloping air which, in Las Meniñas, make the unity and life of the picture. The shadows are still hard and violent; Velazquez accentuates them in order to obtain contrasts and modelling, and the result is that the picture is cut up. The work has great strength: it has been executed without a moment's faltering, and with all the qualities Velazquez possessed from the first, but it does not yet show a trace of that gift by which he made his creatures palpitate in light, or plunged them into a luminous environment, where everything is animated by the subtle

play of values. Nothing of that which made Velazquez a unique master in the art of transposing life is yet apparent.

On the completion of this picture and at the moment of Velazquez' departure for Italy, the King purchased *Los Borrachos* for 100 ducats in silver, and ordered the artist to be paid 300 ducats on account for other pictures. Olivares gave Velazquez 200 ducats in gold, a medallion with the King's likeness and numerous letters of introduction for his journey.

On the same ship as Velazquez there embarked Don Ambrosio Spinola, the famous conqueror of Breda, who was on his way to take up the chief command of the troops in Italy. It was he who was to become some years later the principal figure in the picture of *Las Lanzas*. Notwithstanding his letters of introduction—perhaps because of them —Velazquez was looked upon with some suspicion by the governors of diverse Italian towns, who almost went so far as to accuse him of being a spy. The archives of Naples possess some curious letters of Flavio Atti, ambassador of Parma at Madrid. He an-

GARDEN IN THE VILLA MEDICI

nounces the artist's arrival to the Duchess of Parma and the doubts he entertains concerning him. He explains Velazquez' position at the Court of Spain and the meaning of his title of "usciero di camera," recommends that care should be taken not to pay him exaggerated honours, and advises that he be made acquainted with a painter named Amidano, who should be cautioned, to be "artful in his speech."

Thanks to his placid demeanour and to the exclusive interest he showed in works of art, Velazquez was able to reside, without any interference, in all parts of Italy and even at Venice, which was ill disposed towards Spain. Of all Italian towns, Venice must have been especially attractive to Velazquez. We know that he there copied Tintoretto's *Crucifixion* and *Last Supper*. Velazquez highly admired Tintoretto, who had had a very great influence on one of the Spanish master's predecessors, himself a Spaniard by adoption — we mean Domenico Theotocopouli, El Greco.

This Greek, who was a pupil of the Venetians, had left Venice in 1575 and taken up his abode at Toledo, where he had lived

until his death in 1614. He must certainly have been known to and appreciated by Velazquez. At the latter's death several portraits by El Greco[1] were found in his possession. The portraits in the Prado give some idea of El Greco's impetuous talent and the curious individuality of his colouring. There is no doubt that Velazquez often visited Toledo, where most of Theotocopouli's works were to be found, and where a great number of them may still be seen. The novel harmonies of these portraits, their greys, and dusky pinks, and sober whites, and attenuated blacks; the general appearance of these works, in which the gloomy ardour of Catholic Castile burns with a stifled flame; the stern, fierce character of the heads, which are modelled with a kind of morbid sensibility, and which, as they stare down at you from their starched ruffs, seem to send a shudder of the artist's fever through your veins; the concentrated and somewhat unwholesome life of these beings in whom are mingled El Greco's observation of nature and a kind of ecstatic transport, all this cannot fail to have struck Velazquez.

[1] Two portraits of men and one of a woman.

Did the Sevillian painter divine to what account his genius (different as it was from El Greco's) might put the quiet tones and sober concords of Venetian harmonies muted by the sordino of Spain? At the same time El Greco's religious compositions in which, through the strange fancies of a visionary, are manifest the tradition and teaching of Tintoretto, must have served in a way as stepping stones towards a full appreciation of that Venetian art to which Velazquez felt himself drawn.

From Venice Velazquez went to Rome by way of Ferrara. Throughout his journey he was accompanied or preceded by letters of introduction. At Ferrara, Cardinal Sacchetti, a former nuncio at Madrid, gave him a warm welcome. The ambassador at Madrid, Averardo de Medici, writes confidentially to the Archbishop of Pisa[1] that he will shortly receive the visit of the painter Velazquez, and that he must be careful to say "you" to him and not "your excellency," for although he is a favourite of the King's, he is, after all, nothing but a painter. But the letter ends with a recom-

[1] Archives of the Medici at Florence.

mendation to treat Velazquez well, "according to his kind of profession," for "with Spaniards of low condition one loses as much by honouring them too little as by honouring them too much."[1] At Rome the Pope's nephew, Cardinal Barberini, offered Velazquez the hospitality of the Vatican, but Velazquez preferred to solicit the Duke of Tuscany (through the intermediary of the Spanish ambassador, the Count of Monterey) for permission to reside at the Villa Medici. Pacheco tells us that when Velazquez "had visited the palace and gardens of the Medicis at Trinità dei Monti he thought it the best place for his studies and for a summer residence. It is indeed the highest and airiest spot and there are many excellent statues to copy. . . . He lived there for two months and then a tertian fever obliged him to come down and settle nearer the Count, who took great care of him during his illness, sent him his doctor, gave him medicines at his own expense, and ordered that everything in the house should be arranged according to his wishes. He also bestowed on

[1] Perchè con li Spagnuoli bassi tãto si perde in stimarli poco, quanto in stimarli troppo.

GARDEN IN THE VILLA MEDICI

him all kinds of delicacies and many remembrances." [1]

Nicolas Poussin lived in the neighbourhood and Claude Lorrain was at Rome or had just passed through. We do not know whether Velazquez met either of these great artists,[2] but he has left us two landscapes which were executed in the gardens of the Villa Medici (see pp. 77 and 83). The charm of these two little pictures is singularly penetrating. They are both treated very simply and have kept all the freshness of the first impression—notes that bear witness to Velazquez' artistic sensibility. We feel the emotion he experienced in the gardens, the pleasure he took in contemplating the marble statues among the yews and cypresses. There emanates from these studies something of the complex charm of Roman villas, something of the mysterious fascination of memory-haunted places. We are reminded of Corot and the

[1] "Arte de la Pintura," i. 138.

[2] Readers who are interested in the imaginary reconstitution of Velazquez' life in Rome may consult the fictitious letters by Velazquez fabricated by Herr Justi in his great work.

first landscapes he painted at Rome. The sincerity of the Spanish master is no less lively than that of the great modern painter. The subtle relation of the tones and the sprightly and ingenious arrangement of the colour masses make these two studies in the Prado invaluable for the enjoyment of the spontaneous and impulsive side of Velazquez' art as well as of its delicate harmony.

During his stay at Rome, Velazquez also painted (besides his own portrait) two large compositions which form a pair. One, *The Forge of Vulcan* (see p. 87), is at the Prado; the other, *Joseph's Coat* (see p. 91), at the Escorial. Both these pictures (the latter is much damaged) are remarkable as showing a fresh departure in the treatment of the light and air. It was probably the influence of his Roman surroundings which made Velazquez choose academic subjects, occasions for painting the nude. The old realistic and somewhat jocose vein of *Los Borrachos* is still there, but there has been added an attempt after atmosphere and modelling in the light. Apollo reveals the infidelity of Venus to Vulcan. Joseph's brothers bring back his bloody coat

THE FORGE OF VULCAN

to Jacob. All the figures are portraits. The same models appear in both pictures and one model has been portrayed several times in different attitudes in the same picture. The figure of Vulcan, which is admirably executed, with a certainty and broadness of touch that contrast slightly with the rest of the picture, must have been painted in by Velazquez later. The accessories, as usual, are done with scrupulous accuracy, and the only mythological and biblical parts about the pictures are their titles. But the light is more diffused and less brutal than in his preceding works. Perhaps the studio where Velazquez worked had a softer light and the painter was led to observe that a light that envelopes is apt to produce far more interesting studies than a light that defines? The harmonies are greyer than in *Los Borrachos*, the figures less hard and dry. There is something new in Velazquez. The change of scenery and society, the sights of Venice and Rome, the copies he had the means of executing, put him on a track he was destined to pursue further and further. His figures begin to move in an environment where the air circulates and the light plays.

Perhaps one day after weeks of travelling and sight-seeing, whilst he was walking in the wonderful gardens of the Villa Medici, Velazquez half closed those eyes which, as a rule, he kept so implacably wide open upon Nature? Was it during a Roman twilight? Was it in front of the amber-hued glooms of some picture of Titian's? Was it in a studio where the light was more softly shaded than at Madrid? It seems to have been at Rome that Velazquez first had the revelation of "envelope," of the air which lies between the painter and his model, of the manner in which the light caresses surfaces, of the imperceptible transition from the things themselves to the atmosphere in which they are wrapped.

To an artist who enters upon this kind of investigation, the whole of space opens out and grows alive, while an infinite treasure of constantly renewed and increasingly subtle sensations strike his eye, solicit, enchant and refine it. The dry and somewhat laboured side of Velazquez' early works gradually disappears; his realism as it becomes more real becomes less brutal. The painter no longer presents us with objects and persons which

JOSEPH'S COAT

he puts before our eyes directly and ruthlessly, but with aerial spaces which attract our gaze, with rooms which tempt us to enter, with interiors which invite us to enjoy the delicate gradations a great artist has taken pleasure in discerning and expressing. Velazquez' first pictures stood out from their frames or came close up to them. His figures, notwithstanding the relief of the drawing and the precision of the modelling, were inlaid into the painting like mosaics. It was at Rome that Velazquez began to paint those pictures of his which seem to break down walls and make the room in which they are placed more spacious; pictures which show us, and that without any trickery, the delicately graduated depths, in which the artist saw the beings and things he painted grow light or become suffused with shade, melt or fade into the distance, vanish or flash suddenly forth. The day on which he perceived what it was that united and bound together the different objects which he had hitherto observed separately, the day on which he saw the air, the impalpable and fluid medium in which everything is steeped, on that day Velazquez discovered what gives his

pictures the unity, cohesion and harmony of all their parts. It was by this pursuit of values, this art of painting what is exterior to the surface of things, that the severe draughtsman of the *Water Carrier of Seville,* the painter who etched in every line of his model's faces, and outlined every tooth disclosed by their rigid laughter, was led little by little to produce *Las Meniñas,* in which we find that elusive touch, which near at hand seems so mysteriously entangled, and which seen from the proper place reveals so marvellously much, and is neither stroke nor smear, but the very expression of the artist's intention, the representation of the object at its actual distance and at its real depth in space behind the canvas. After his stay at Rome, with a taste and a choice of harmonies that grew daily surer and more felicitous, Velazquez began that series of masterpieces of which the last is to the first as a butterfly sparkling in the air is to a butterfly pinned down in a collection, as a rose flowering in a garden and dusted with pollen is to a rose in a herbarium. It was on his return from Rome that Velazquez set himself to leaving the

PORTRAIT OF THE INFANTA MARIA OF SPAIN

bloom on what he painted. He gives us the perception of values so subtle, shades so finely blended, such harmony of form and such movement of line, as none but he has caught and fixed on canvas, in the mystery of an atmosphere which is invisible yet present, which is neither a veil nor a mist nor a gleam, but which gives life to his creatures as the air gives life in Nature.

At the beginning of the winter of 1630, as Velazquez was preparing to return to Spain, he was commanded to go to Naples in order to bring back a portrait of the King's sister, the Infanta Maria of Spain, wife of King Ferdinand of Hungary. This is probably the half-length portrait No. 1072 in the Prado (see p. 95). Velazquez has portrayed the princess, who was famous for her beauty, with that desire for exactness which never abandoned him. The nose and mouth are characteristic of a sister of Philip IV.'s. The face is cold and haughty. Some portions of the portrait are still a little dry; others, the fair hair, for instance, are charmingly delicate in tone and execution.

Velazquez probably made friends with his compatriot Ribera, who was settled at Naples,

and of whom Philip IV. later on bought several pictures at Velazquez' recommendation. But as soon as he had finished the Queen of Hungary's portrait, Velazquez embarked for Spain, taking with him, besides his pictures of *Vulcan's Forge* and *Joseph's Coat*, a *Danae* by Titian, and pictures by Cambiasi and Bassano. "He returned after a year and a half's absence," says Pacheco, "and arrived in Madrid at the beginning of 1631. He was cordially welcomed by the Count-Duke, at whose command he forthwith attended the audience of His Majesty, to whom he tendered many thanks for not having been portrayed by any other painter. His Majesty was greatly pleased at his return."

CHAPTER VII

Return to Madrid—*Portraits of the King and of Don Diego del Corral*—*The Crucifixion*—*Portrait of the Count of Benavente*—The three portraits of huntsmen—Hunting pictures—Buen Retiro—The equestrian portraits—*The Surrender of Breda.*

Between his return to Madrid in 1631 and his second voyage to Italy (1649), Velazquez practically never left the Court. These eighteen years were the most fruitful of his artistic life. The data we possess do not allow of our making a complete list of the works of this period, nor of our establishing the exact chronology of those pictures which have been preserved. We have, moreover, no intention of enumerating Velazquez' pictures here, and still less of drawing up a catalogue. Visitors to the Prado can follow picture by picture the constant progress and gradual development of the artist, and enjoy the more and more masterly manner in which he depicted those things which struck

him. For our part, we shall attempt neither description nor detailed historical account. Though we have endeavoured to give a slight sketch of the history of the artist's first attempts and of the continued growth of his talent, we think it unnecessary to speak of all his pictures in succession and to describe their beauties—a course which would only lead to wearisome repetition. The manifestations of Velazquez' genius are manifold and diverse, but he always seeks after the same thing and pursues the same end in every one of his pictures—namely, to render what he saw, in the light in which he saw it. We shall not attempt to give an account of Velazquez' light in words. The very reasons which make Velazquez the most "painter-like" of painters, rescue, or should rescue him from literature. A few typical works may serve, to some extent, to illustrate what we wish to say concerning the artist; but we must not forget that from the period of his return to the Spanish Court, Velazquez enters a domain which he alone can describe.

Everything points to the fact that immediately on his arrival at Madrid, Velazquez

PORTRAIT OF DON DIEGO DEL CORRAL

painted a fresh picture of the King, possibly the full-length portrait which is in the National Gallery and of which we have already spoken (see p. 48). The portrait of *Don Diego del Corral* (see p. 101), which belongs to the Duchess of Villahermosa, also dates from this period.

Six or seven years later (1638 or 1639) the master painted his celebrated *Crucifixion*[1] (see p. 105). Velazquez, like all good Spaniards, was certainly a pious Catholic; we have no reason to think otherwise, and it would ill become us to be more particular on this point than the King and the Holy Office. Spain is the country of Crucifixions, and Velazquez was acquainted with the canvases in which El Greco expressed the burning ardour of his faith. The King ordered his painter to paint a picture of the Saviour on the cross; this was a fine opportunity for the artist to reveal to us a little of the piety of his soul, while paying homage to his God. But the homage he paid was to the light of day and to the human body. There is, however, nothing jarring, nothing out of place in this picture, before which the faithful

[1] No. 1055 in the Prado.

souls of the Convent of San Placido no doubt prayed in all devotion. There is nothing here of the theatrical flashiness, the noisy eloquence we find in Rubens' religious pictures, nothing of Rembrandt's grief and pity; there is no trace of Titian's tone symphonies, of Dürer's implacability, or of Holbein's application; there is nothing either pre-Raphaelite or classical, nothing of the antique, nothing of the Renaissance—merely the tranquil respect of a sacred tradition, the seriousness, the thoughtfulness, the gravity with which a well-bred man and a good Catholic approaches his Church—this, and Nature observed with simplicity and directness, and rendered with love.

This picture, over which many critics have waxed hyperbolical (it is ill seeing on one's knees), represents a nude young man, his arms extended on a cross, his feet resting on a support. He has neither the colour nor the rigidity of a corpse, and does not represent a crucifixion, for he is not really nailed to the cross; the supple arms and admirably drawn hands do not carry the weight of the body and are neither contracted nor distended. The torso is at rest: if nails and blood are to

THE CRUCIFIXION

be seen, it is because the picture is intended to represent Christ crucified. The accessories (there are hardly any save the cross and the scroll) are painted with the same love of reality; the veins in the wood of the cross, with its resinous knots and cracks, are carefully executed. Nevertheless the whole effect is extremely impressive. The hair, which is drooping forwards and which casts a veil of shadow over one whole side of the face, contributes to a sense of mystery which is very striking. This "inspiration of genius" is perhaps due to some chance accident of the studio: the long-haired model probably bent his head forward so as to throw a broad shadow over his face. Every painter who has seen a model do her hair knows what mystery can be given to the most commonplace countenance by the fall of loosened hair over the face. Velazquez knew how to observe and how to remember at the right moment. The tone of the body is incomparably subtle, with its dull, even pallor which is almost livid, though not cadaverous. At the moment when twilight turns to night, the shades of darkness cast a sort of pallor over the bare skin. The flesh

seems to lose its colour, while at the same time remaining visible and surrounded, as it were, by undulations. Velazquez probably spent long evenings watching the night invade his studio; he must have remarked this tremulous pallor in which faces become steeped in the dark. We must not forget that the picture had a special destination, the half-light of the sacristy of the Convent of San Placido; it was not painted for the glare of a picture gallery. The background is black and almost uniform, though at the same time not opaque; the figure of the Christ is made visible without seeming to be outlined; it makes a sharp contrast by its whiteness, but, thanks to the extraordinary subtlety of the values, it is everywhere softened and fused, without any process being visible. This species of harmony —a nude on a black background—is unique among the master's works.[1]

[1] The *Christ at the Pillar* in the National Gallery, which must have been painted very shortly after his return from Rome, is also executed with the same love of realism, one might almost say realistic piety, which characterises Velazquez' religious pictures. The general effect is greyer than the *Crucifixion* of the Prado.

PORTRAIT OF THE COUNT OF BENAVENTE

PORTRAIT OF PRINCE BALTAZAR CARLOS

The *Portrait of the Count of Benavente*[1] (see p. 109) is of about the same date as the *Crucifixion*. Some clumsy touching up, not done by Velazquez, has a little spoilt the face; but the handling of the steel armour damascened with gold is full of gusto. This picture for a long time passed for a Titian; we can feel in it the influence of the portraits Velazquez must have admired at Venice.

During the artist's voyage to Italy, on October 17th, 1629, was born Prince Baltazar Carlos, eldest son of Philip IV. and Isabella of Bourbon. Velazquez painted many portraits of this prince, some of which are to be found in England and in Vienna. The one which is numbered 1076 in the Prado (see p. 111) and in which the Infant is represented at the age of six in hunting costume, was intended for the Torre de la Parada, the Royal hunting lodge of the Monte del Pardo. The portraits of the Infant Don Ferdinand of Austria, the King's brother[2] (see p. 115) and of the King himself[3] (see p. 119) formed part of the same

[1] No. 1090 in the Prado.
[2] No. 1075 in the Prado.
[3] No. 1074 in the Prado.

decoration. The three figures dressed in reddish brown hunting costumes, all three armed with guns and accompanied by their dogs, are depicted in a silvery light against a background of Prado scenery, and standing upright on the ground, which is grey and russet coloured. The Sierra of Guadarrama can be divined in the distance. The air circulates in these pictures to such a degree that they give the spectator a sensation of space and freedom. The execution is admirable; there are some repaintings: the King's breeches (see p. 119) were sketched in fuller at first, and indications of a bullet-pouch or powder-flask are to be seen below the left hand. The head of the Infant Don Ferdinand (see p. 115), which was painted from former studies (he was much older at the time the picture was executed), originally surmounted a large lace collar, which shows a little under the narrow hunting collar and "golilla." The dogs are marvellously painted by a connoisseur and lover of fine animals, with a certainty and freedom which no professional animal painter can approach.

The colour masses of the picture are very

PORTRAIT OF THE INFANT DON FERDINAND
OF AUSTRIA

cleverly managed; the buff leather gloves which cover the hands leave their full value to the extremely characteristic heads—the King's haughty and empty, Don Ferdinand's pale, nervous and uneasy, while that of little Baltazar Carlos is glowing and already imperious, with his quick brown eyes and lively air which forms such a contrast with the long Austrian faces of his father and uncle. A tree—an oak tree which is in the middle distance of each of these three admirable pictures—contributes to their decorative unity. The grand air and aristocratic haughtiness, combined with the scrupulous accuracy of these portraits of princes and hunters, which are at the same time portraits of dogs and evocations of hunting grounds, the general impression produced by these pictures, which are so perfectly adapted to their purpose, make them types of their kind. If the kings of Spain were great hunters, their memory has been immortalised by the most marvellous painter of hunters that ever existed.

Several of these hunting scenes which Velazquez painted for the Torre de la Parada have disappeared. *The Boar Hunt in the*

Hoyo,[1] which is now in the National Gallery, is one of these pictures. The canvas has been greatly damaged, but it is still possible to get an idea of what it must have been like before it went through the ordeals of fire and restoration. The King on horseback, accompanied by numerous riders pursuing boars, is to be seen in the midst of the nets and cloths which served to beat in the game. In the foreground and outside the circle is a whole crowd of noblemen, huntsmen, grooms, dogs, common folk and beggars — living, moving groups which, in spite of their small dimensions, are executed with remarkable breadth and simplicity. In the background are the rising slopes of the Pardo dotted with oaks.[2]

[1] The spot in the royal park where these entertainments took place.

[2] The *View of Saragossa* (No. 788 in the Prado) (see p. 121), attributed to the painter Mazo, Velazquez' pupil and his son-in-law from the year 1634, was probably touched up by Velazquez, who painted in the whole foreground and peopled it with figures in the style of the *Boar Hunt*. Nothing can be more skilful and accurate, more lively and spirited than these groups of strollers, ladies and hucksters

PORTRAIT OF KING PHILIP IV

VIEW OF SARAGOSSA

Philip IV. attached great importance to his hunting exploits; ambassadors used to mention them at length in their despatches. Besides being the King's chief amusement, they were his only feats of prowess and his most illustrious achievements. The inventories preserved among the palace archives mention pictures by Velazquez representing the "horns of a stag killed by the hand of King Philip IV. in the year 1626, with an explanatory legend"; the "head and horns of a stag"; "fourteen spoils of stags and hinds forming eight pictures"; "two horses, one bay and one brown"; "two horses and riders"; a "landscape with a pelican and sundry figures"; a "hunting scene, in which King Philip IV., accompanied by his brothers Don Carlos and Don Fernando, pursues a boar and has his horse ripped up." It was by brushing in decorative panels of this kind, and doubtless also by assisting in person at many a hunting party, that Velazquez acquired that perfect knowledge of the details of the chase, of

adorning the banks of the Ebro and distributed with a charming fancy in patches of colour that are full of gusto.

dogs, horses and harness, which enabled him to give his pictures the character of essential truth which animates them.

Space, open air, an atmosphere pervaded with life, depths of sky and whiffs of breeze, which make the whole landscape participate in the picture, are to be found also in Velazquez' equestrian portraits. Between the years 1635 and 1638 he executed or touched up six large equestrian portraits intended for the decoration of the Salon de Los Reinos in the palace of Buen Retiro. Olivares had recently built at vast expense this luxurious abode, surrounded by gardens and parks. He wished to offer the King a new pleasure-house and to adorn it magnificently. The Salon de Los Reinos, or the room of the kingdoms, was to contain, besides large historical pictures relating the military glories of Spain, gala portraits of the kings of the reigning dynasty.

One of the first that Velazquez painted was that of the heir presumptive, little *Baltazar Carlos*[1] (see p. 125). The prince is mounted on a spirited horse, perhaps the very same fiery little stallion, the "diablillo," which the

[1] No. 1068 in the Prado.

PORTRAIT OF PRINCE BALTAZAR CARLOS

Infant Ferdinand had sent him as a present from Lombardy with a suit of armour and some toy greyhounds. This is one of the most enchanting of Velazquez' pictures. It is impossible to imagine without seeing it, the combined freshness and richness of this picture, through which is sweeping the breeze of a gallop. The little prince, who is six or seven years old, is set gallantly astride his mount and bravely dressed in gold embroidered velvet with a scarf of a delicious pink fluttering in the wind; he holds in his hand a baton of command, which he is wielding with an air of decision. The conquering demeanour which no king of Spain may be without is already his. He is a very cavalier. His supple leather boot is placed faultlessly in the stirrup, and his hand, lightly held just above the pommel, does honour to his riding-master. He is the worthy son of a king who prided himself on being the first horseman in his kingdom. The head (see p. 129), over which the large plumed felt hat casts an oblique shadow, is a marvel of childish life. We feel the ardour and vivacity of a grandson of Henri IV.; the growing pride of a young prince who has been brought up

among courtiers. The little horseman, for all he is so correctly seated in his saddle, is full of dashing impetuosity. Perhaps this impression is conveyed by the general aspect of the picture, by the something of wildness in the floating mane, in the waving scarf, and in the breeze which hurries the clouds through a vast sky? Perhaps it comes only from the firm unswerving glance, a little hard — unforgettable — of the brown eyes which scan you from on high? We are conscious that a violent nature is awakening to life, and are not surprised by what the chroniclers relate concerning the premature death of the young prince.

The portrait of *King Philip IV.*[1] (see p. 131) stands out, like his son's, against a vast landscape in the Pardo, in the distance of which can be seen the blue slopes of the Guadarrama. The picture is full of grandeur. The general line of the rider's silhouette (it has been several times modified and many repaintings are visible) is admirably harmonious. The horse, a superb specimen of the race of Spanish horses (a race now extinct and at that time

[1] No. 1066 in the Prado.

PORTRAIT OF PRINCE BALTAZAR CARLOS (DETAIL)

PORTRAIT OF KING PHILIP IV

greatly sought after), is painted with extraordinary craftsmanship and taste. It has the slightly theatrical gait which Spanish horsemen of to-day still love, and is being set through its paces and made to show off in riding school style: the animal, which is well groomed, spirited and perfectly broken in, is a stallion already beginning to grow heavy. (A horse which the king had once ridden, could never be ridden again by anyone else.) Over the armour, which is picked out with gold, play the pinks of the scarf, the crimson of the breeches and the light tan of the boots. But, notwithstanding the indescribable charm of the colouring, the attitude has in it something so definitive, the poise of the whole is so perfect, that we are reminded of a statue. The design for an equestrian statue which Velazquez, at the command of Olivares, sent to the Florentine sculptor Pietro Tacca, for the monument which was to be erected in the courtyard of the palace of Buen Retiro, cannot have been more statuesque than the great portrait of the King.

Two large equestrian portraits of *King Philip III.* (see p. 135) and his wife *Queen Margaret of*

Austria (see p. 137) were already in existence.[1] They were by Velazquez' predecessor, Bartolomy Gonzales, the Court painter. Velazquez rehandled them so as to put them into harmony with the decoration of the Salon de Los Reinos. He made some slight alterations in the Queen's portrait and more important ones in the King's —the armour, the right arm, the leg, foot and stirrup, the bit and the ornaments of the crupper, and part of the seascape in the background. Some alterations were also made by his pupils with the master's guidance.

Neither is the portrait of *Isabella of Bourbon*[2] (see p. 141), Philip IV.'s first wife, entirely by Velazquez' hand. It is said that the unfortunate Queen disliked sitting for her portrait. She suffered keenly from the manœuvring of Olivares, who was afraid of her influence over Philip IV. and held her aloof from public affairs, even scheming to alienate from her the affections of her royal husband. The King's painter, the Count-Duke's protégé, cannot have been viewed with favour by the Queen. The portions of the

[1] Nos. 1064 and 1065 in the Prado.

[2] No. 1067 in the Prado.

PORTRAIT OF KING PHILIP III

PORTRAIT OF QUEEN MARGARET OF AUSTRIA

great portrait in the Prado which were painted by Velazquez are apparent at the first glance; he probably made use of a former study to paint the head of the lady whom Madame d'Aulnoy describes as "plump, fair and very agreeable, with fine eyes and a gentle and witty appearance."[1] At the moment when the equestrian portrait was painted, the daughter of Henri IV. and Marie de Medici must have been older than she is represented by Velazquez. Her face, which is regularly beautiful, with large brown eyes and a pure brow, surmounts a tulle ruff; above her head, her hair forms a dark mass in which is placed a white aigrette. Velazquez has touched neither the hands nor the horse-cloth nor the dress, which is heavy and laboriously executed, though he has broken the stiff monotony of the skirt by putting in some folds with a few summary strokes. And then on the top of the black or brown horse on which the Queen was mounted in the earlier picture, he has painted, with extraordinary brio and marvellous dash, a superb white horse (see p. 141) spotted with

[1] "Grasse, blanche et très agréable: les yeux beaux, l'air doux et spirituel."

red and with gold incrusted accoutrements. This alone is sufficient to modify completely the whole air and harmony of the picture.

With these royal likenesses may be classed the great equestrian portrait which Velazquez painted at the same time for his patron Olivares [1] (see p. 147). The Count-Duke, though he was never under fire, has had himself represented in the costume, armour and traditional attitude given by painters to generals of armies. The powerful horse on which he is mounted is a glossy bay. Olivares' silhouette is a little heavy; the time when he was famous for the elegance of his horsemanship has gone by. The foreshortening of the horse's forequarters, which is a little forced (here again, as with the horse of Baltazar Carlos, Velazquez was unable to draw from nature), gives the impression that the rider is seated too far forward. But the life and character of the head are extremely fine. The landscape, which is more conventional than in the portraits of the King and Prince Baltazar Carlos, represents a battle in the distance.

The equestrian portraits which we have just

[1] No. 1069 in the Prado.

PORTRAIT OF QUEEN ISABELLA OF BOURBON

THE HORSE OF QUEEN ISABELLA OF BOURBON
(DETAIL

mentioned all show a regard for decorative composition, which is something new in Velazquez. His journey to Italy taught the artist much. He saw the great decorations of the Venetian masters and profited by them; the equestrian portraits of Rubens at Madrid also helped him; and lastly, his predecessors at the Court, though their talents were of the most ordinary kind, had already painted equestrian portraits of so analogous a composition that Velazquez was able to use them and work upon them. Here, as in all his works, it was only by his truth of observation that Velazquez can be called an innovator. We must remember that these pictures made part of one and the same decoration. Admirable as they appear to us, they necessarily lose much by being hung among other paintings of all sorts on the walls of a picture gallery.[1] We must

[1] Frequenters of the Louvre, who thought they knew the Rubenses in the great gallery, remember the revelation it proved to every one when the new Rubens room was opened: separated from one another and placed in accordance with the original design, they seem different pictures. Those who had admired them before find fresh beauties in

imagine them in the great Salon de Los Reinos; with their backgrounds of Pardo scenery, they seemed to open on the out-door world and let in a whiff of country air; they extolled the pleasures of the chase among the adjacent moors, and at the same time glorified the rider kings.

It was for the same Salon de Los Reinos that Velazquez painted (about 1640) the most celebrated of his pictures, *The Surrender of Breda,* better known under the name of *Las Lanzas* [1] (see p. 151). It is quite natural that the taste of the public should be inclined to give the preference to this picture. Pictures which are only perfectly painted, masterpieces of pure painting, are interesting especially to painters. The qualities which make Velazquez the master *par excellence* of those who love painting considered as the art of translating the emotions of sight, whatever they may be, are the very qualities that disconcert the public in his portraits of dwarfs, who make us neither

them: those who asserted that these paintings were inferior to Rubens' other compositions are obliged to admit that they had misjudged them.

[1] No. 1060 in the Prado.

PORTRAIT OF OLIVARES

weep nor smile, in his portraits of philosophers who are beggars, in his interiors where nothing happens, nay, even in his historical portraits from which it would seem that the painter purposely banished History as it is understood by anecdote lovers. The *Surrender of Breda* is an exception in Velazquez' work. It is a picture in which something is happening —an historical event—the giving up of the keys of a conquered city. Not only does this canvas give occasion for commentaries which are foreign to painting—and this to many people seems the object at which all artists should aim—but it actually necessitates explanations and calls aloud for an anecdote.

Velazquez wished to celebrate the most glorious event of the reign, the fall of the citadel of Breda, which was due to the energy and military skill of Ambrosio Spinola. The King, says tradition, had contented himself with sending a note to his general containing the words "Marques, sumais Breda. Yo el Rey."[1] After a long resistance the garrison was obliged to capitulate "with all the honours of war." The capitulation was signed on

[1] "Marquis, take Breda. I the King."

June 2nd, 1625; three days later the keys were delivered up. This forms the subject of the picture.

In the middle of the canvas, Spinola receives the vanquished governor, Justin of Nassau, who offers him the keys of the town. Spinola's face is alive. Velazquez had probably taken sketches of it during his voyage to Italy. The victor, slightly stooping forward his tall figure, lays his hand on the shoulder of his unfortunate adversary. The truth, mildness and courtesy of the action are charming. The smile on his lips, the gentleness in his eyes, the whole of his bearing, make him the personification of chivalrous politeness. Justin of Nassau, as he bends forward, looks up at the victor, whom he salutes. Behind Nassau there is a group of Flemish; behind Spinola a group of Spaniards (nearly all portraits); surmounted by the long shafts of the lances which made the Spanish infantry famous throughout Europe, and which gave the picture its name. In the background is a vast landscape with troops filing past, lances and standards, rivers and trenches. The harmony of the pale sky, in which smoke is

THE SURRENDER OF BREDA (LAS LANZAS)

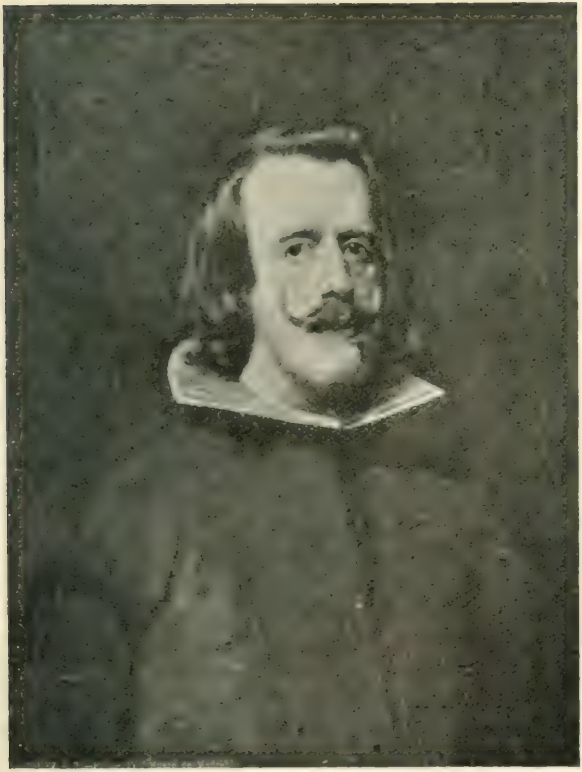
rising and clouds are passing, is exquisite. In the foreground, on the right, Spinola's horse forms a large dark patch which shows up the charming delicacy of the tones of a white and blue checked flag.

None of Velazquez' pictures has been more praised than *Las Lanzas*; it is admired as much for the nobility of the painter's sentiments as for its painting; people see in it the symbol of the struggle between two nations, two civilisations and two religions! . . These are philosophical and historical considerations which do not come within our scope. It is certain that Velazquez has been tempted by the pictorial contrast between the heavily built Nassau, still further weighted by his great jack boots, and the aristocratic elegance of Spinola, slim and shapely in his close-fitting armour and trim boots that mould his legs and feet. Spinola is the accomplished type of Spanish gallantry. To those who object that he was a Genoese condottiere, it is a sufficient answer that the painter was Spanish, and that is all that matters. The gesture with which Spinola receives Nassau is the same gesture with

which Spaniards, to this very day, receive the guest at whose "disposicion" they put themselves. If it was not actually Spinola's, it would have been Velazquez' in his place and he painted it.

Las Lanzas is a historical picture of the greatest beauty, and those who rank historical painting above all other kinds are right in esteeming that the *Surrender of Breda* is Velazquez' masterpiece. For our part, in spite of our admiration, we cannot help feeling that Velazquez was not a historical painter and that a large decorative and historical picture did not give him the opportunity of utilising all the resources of his talent, or the possibility of showing to advantage the most precious gifts of his genius. The lover of painting who feels keenly the beauty of portraits like that of *Martinez Montañes*, of *Don Antonio el Ingles* and of *Margaret of Austria*,[1] or of a picture like *Las Meniñas*, will seek in vain in *Las Lanzas* the unity of impression, the connecting link of the atmosphere which make so perfect a whole of some of the master's works. He

[1] No. 1084 in the Prado.



PORTRAIT OF KING PHILIP IV

will not be able to avoid feeling a certain artificiality in the grouping, a certain something that cannot have failed to distress Velazquez himself, and which makes gaps, as it were, in the picture. The anecdotic interest is such and the power of expression so great, that we do not at once perceive these voids. We admire Spinola, we gaze at Nassau, and we revel in the variety of physiognomies and attitudes, but we find it difficult to embrace the picture as a whole, and at a distance the composition falls into partitions.

It could not have been otherwise. In these great decorations, the essential truth, the truth of environment, must always be lacking. It would be as useless to expect it here as in a tapestry, and it would ill become us to criticise Velazquez for submitting to the necessary conditions of this species of painting. But it was not a species of painting which would have allowed of his proving himself the marvellous artist, the incomparable painter whom we know. However agreeable may be the colouring of the light in *Las Lanzas*, it is a conventional light when we compare it with the light of *Baltazar Carlos*, for instance. The artist has

not felt it on the spot; the landscape does not make one with the picture. If the gesture of the Italian Spinola is a Spanish gesture, is the country where the scene takes place really Holland? It would be absurd to reproach the painter with this;[1] we only wish to say that we are conscious of an effort in the assemblage of elements in this great canvas; Velazquez the realist was not completely at his ease in the domain of history, which, in painting at anyrate, is a fiction. *The Surrender of Breda* is, we repeat, a masterpiece. By the force of things Velazquez was obliged to remain within the conventions of historical painting. The subject constrained him. This time again the artist was right: had the picture been more realistic it would have lost its interest, its dignity, its air, the side of heroic chronicle which one requires in a painting of this kind. It was *necessary* to remain within the conventions; but it is in the pictures in which he is unconventional that Velazquez is Velazquez.

[1] What shall we say of Herr Justi, who remarks that the "light comes from the left and consequently from the south-east, the delivery of the keys having taken place at ten o'clock in the morning"?

CHAPTER VIII

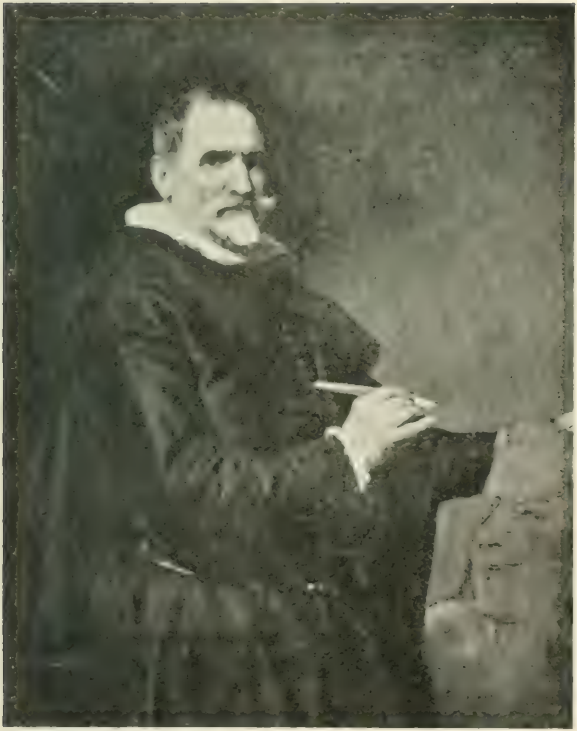
Portraits of Velazquez by himself—*Martinez Montañes*—Second journey to Italy—*Portrait of Pope Innocent X.* Return to Madrid—*Portraits of the Queen and Infanta*—The dwarfs and jesters—The philosophers: *Mercury and Argus*—*Mars*—*Venus at the Looking-glass*—Velazquez' sensibility.

The half-length portrait which is at the gallery of Valencia (see frontispiece) shows us Velazquez as he must have looked at the time when he was painting *Las Lanzas*. This, with the portrait of the painter in *Las Meniñas*, is one of the rare likenesses of Velazquez, the authenticity of which is probable. The canvas has been much damaged, has turned yellow beneath its varnish, and has been clumsily restored. The face, with its marked Andalusian type, is very interesting. The sombre and glowing eyes give us the impression of settling down on the things which they observe. They recall certain looks by

which one has at times been scanned in the streets of Seville, and which seem to lay hold of and finger one. The mouth, strongly and simply built, is calm beneath the turned-up moustache. The face is quiet, full of self-confidence and without a trace of uneasiness. The long hair, which falls on to the starched collar on either side of the face (in *Las Meniñas* as well as in the Valencia portrait) may very well be a wig.

It was probably a few years later, about 1648, that Velazquez painted the admirable *Portrait of the sculptor Martinez Montañes*[1] (see p. 161). Recent investigation has confirmed the opinion that this is really the portrait of Martinez Montañes. What we know of this artist's life renders probable the date of 1648 which has been assigned to this picture. We can produce no document by which to dispute these assertions, but it would not surprise us if the portrait in the Prado were several years posterior to this date. In a certain sense we may say that Velazquez never went further than in this work. The life of the whole is prodigious, the certainty

[1] No. 1091 in the Prado.



PORTRAIT OF THE SCULPTOR MARTINEZ MONTANES

of the drawing incomparable, and the technique, which is varied, supple and easy, has a highly individual flavour. If the portrait dates from 1648, its specially admirable qualities may perhaps be attributed to the perfect freedom of mind which is enjoyed by an artist who works for a friend. When he paints the portrait of a man by whom he is certain to be understood, when he need neither fear, nor tolerate, nor respect, nor solicit the observations, criticisms or compliments of his model, when that model happens to be a brother artist, a person with whom he may be in complete artistic sympathy—then the painter, without let or hindrance, can rise superior to his ordinary productions. Perhaps it is to reasons of this order that this great work owes the masterly breadth which hitherto Velazquez had not shown to an equal extent.

Certain portions of the picture are hardly painted at all. In parts the canvas is bare. The shadows are scarcely touched with colour; the lights are put in firmly with paint which is thick and at the same time fluid. The bonework of the head and construction of the face are

adamantine in their power and solidity. The whole personage shows a character of great force, determination and concentration of purpose. The hand, which is holding a modelling-tool has been indicated by a few touches with a generously filled paint-brush, and is alive and full of meaning. This picture, of which certain portions are, as it were, sketched in, is by no means a sketch; on the contrary it gives the impression of being final and decisive, of saying all it means to say. The solidly built face, the bony arch of the eye-brows, the eyes, barely touched with colour, have all the qualities of individual life. In the same room, Titian's admirable portraits look painstaking and laboured when compared with this masterpiece, which is so restrained in its grey harmony. The Goyas on the wall opposite seem full of unrealised aspirations and an impetuous sensuality which is at once uneasy and timid, notwithstanding its feigned assurance. Rubens' astonishing *Marie de Medici* looks like a virtuoso's "tour de force." Velazquez' sculptor, robust and air-encircled, as he looks out at us from his canvas with that supreme simplicity which is the affirmation of genius, seems to

PORTRAIT OF QUEEN MARIANA OF AUSTRIA

invite our recognition of the fact that Velazquez, more than any of the others, knew how to see.

The desire of re-visiting Italy must often have come to Velazquez; he took advantage of his title of Inspector of Royal Buildings and of a scheme for creating a Royal Academy of Fine Arts at Madrid, in order to petition the King for a fresh mission to Italy for the purpose of acquiring works of art. Notwithstanding the King's authorisation, Velazquez had to undergo difficulties and delays before obtaining the necessary money for his journey. The royal order, dated May 18th, 1648, was not put into execution till October 6th, and Velazquez did not actually start before November. War was raging in Catalonia, where Barcelona was in the hands of the French. At Alicante, at Valencia and at Seville there was an epidemic of plague. It was therefore at Malaga that Velazquez embarked on January 2nd, 1649.

Sea journeys were dangerous on account of pirates; Velazquez took his passage on board the same ship as the ambassador who was going to Trent in order to meet and escort back to Madrid the princess who was to become Philip IV.'s second wife, his niece

Mariana of Austria, daughter of the Emperor Ferdinand III. and that Infanta whose portrait Velazquez had painted at Naples in 1630.[1] Disembarking at Genoa on February 11th, Velazquez passed through Milan and Padua without awaiting the festivities prepared for the reception of the King's bride, and arrived in Venice on April 21st. In this city, which was at that time celebrated throughout the whole world as the great picture market, he bought several canvases, among which were Veronese's *Venus and Adonis*, Tintoretto's *Purification of the Midianite Virgins*, and a sketch of the same painter's *Paradise*.[2] From here, Velazquez went to Rome, which he was obliged to leave almost immediately in order to present his letters of credit to Count d'Oñate, the Viceroy at Naples. In this town he made numerous acquisitions of marble statues and antique bronzes, and ordered casts to be sent to Spain. He renewed acquaintance with his friend, fellow countryman and fellow artist, Ribera.

[1] Mariana of Austria had first been betrothed to the King's son, Baltazar Carlos, who died in 1646.

[2] These pictures are now in the Prado.

PORTRAIT OF THE INFANTA MARIA TERESA

Some time afterwards, just before the celebration of the Universal Jubilee, Velazquez returned to Rome. Here he found a crowd of illustrious visitors: painters, such as Nicolas Poussin, Salvator Rosa, and the celebrated fresco painter Berettini da Cortona, and sculptors, such as the Bolognese Alessandro Algardi and Bernini. We do not know much of the relations Velazquez may have had at Rome with his fellow artists. He was chiefly occupied with purchases for Madrid and does not seem to have painted at all during the first months of his stay, until the Pope commissioned him to take his portrait. Before executing a work of such importance, Velazquez, in order to "get his hand in," brushed in the masterly portrait of his slave, the mulatto *Juan de Pareja*,[1] which was exhibited at the Guildhall.

[1] This Juan de Pareja, who was for a long time employed by the artist to grind his colours, learnt to paint, according to Palomino, "without his master's knowledge and by depriving himself of his necessary sleep." He acquired a certain celebrity as a painter, after having been freed by Velazquez. There exists a canvas by Pareja in the Prado Gallery.

The portrait of Pope Innocent X. is one of the most celebrated of the master's. This is due no doubt to its admirable qualities, and partly perhaps to the fact that the portrait is at Rome in the Doria palace. Artists, critics and amateurs go more to Rome than to Madrid, and it is through the portrait of Innocent X. that they learn to know Velazquez. This portrait is a masterpiece; it is the only masterpiece by Velazquez that they know, whence the natural conclusion that it is Velazquez' masterpiece. The reality of the face is prodigious and surprises the beholder. The portrait of Pareja which was exhibited in the Pantheon of Rome caused Velazquez' immediate election as Member of the Academy; the portrait of Innocent X. excited the admiration, the enthusiasm and the astonishment of all artists. It has been copied, imitated, "pastiched," reproduced, described, compared, commentated, analysed and explained so many times that we shall content ourselves here with merely recalling this life-like painting, whose cunning and brutality take away one's breath, and before which one feels almost terror-stricken—this

PABLILLOS DE VALLADOLID

portrait, whose terrible resemblance Innocent X. thought "troppo vero," and which those who have once seen can never forget. It is said that Velazquez refused to be paid by the Pope and rejected all remuneration, alleging that his master the King of Spain rewarded him sufficiently with his own hand. The Pope thereupon sent him a gold chain and a medallion with his likeness on it.

After persuading the fresco painters Metelli and Colonna to go to Spain in order to undertake the decoration of the Alcazar and of the palace of Buen Retiro, Velazquez does not seem to have made much haste to return to Madrid. The King transmitted to him, through his secretary, Don Fernando Ruiz de Contreras, urgent entreaties to hasten his return. Velazquez had planned to cross France and visit Paris—he had even had his passport "visé" to that end—but he was obliged to sacrifice this scheme to the King's impatience. Letters of Philip IV., originals of which are preserved in the family archives of the Osuna y del Infantado,[1] give us curious

[1] These extracts from Philip IV.'s letters are quoted from M. de Beruete's work on Velazquez.

glimpses of Velazquez' character. In one of these letters, dated February 17th, 1650, the King says to his ambassador, the Duke del Infantado: "Since you are acquainted with his phlegmatic disposition" (he is speaking of Velazquez), "be careful to prevent his taking advantage of it so as to prolong his stay abroad." And further on, "I am sending word to Velazquez that he is not to travel back by land, as with a character like his it would retard his home-coming." In another letter dated June 22nd of the same year, the King again insists on his return and adds: "If he has not already started, which I doubt, it would be well for you to urge him not to delay his departure a single minute." When, after reading this letter and reflecting on the authority a king of Spain had in the eyes of a Spanish subject, we learn that Velazquez delayed *another year* before starting, we cannot help concluding that he was a person whose tranquillity of mind was not easily disturbed.

In June 1651, Velazquez, after a stormy passage, returned to Spain, which he was never to leave again. At the beginning of the year 1652 he was appointed Grand

EL PRIMO

Marshal of the Palace ("aposentador"). His new functions (the preparation of Royal residences, the organisation of the removals of the Court and the furnishing and decorating of the palaces) took up much of his time. The first portrait he painted after his return was that of the new queen, Mariana of Austria, now at Vienna. Some years later he painted his two full-length portraits of the Queen.[1] The first of these pictures is a replica of the one numbered 1079 which we reproduce (see p. 165). Its harmony is exceedingly delicate and its execution superb. All the portraits which Velazquez painted at this period are so many masterpieces. The one which is numbered 1084 (see p. 169), and which represents either (it is uncertain which) *Maria Teresa* or the *Infanta Margarita*,[2] the young queen's eldest daughter, is a pure marvel as far as regards the parts painted by the master himself. The head has undergone consider-

[1] Nos. 1078 and 1079 in the Prado.

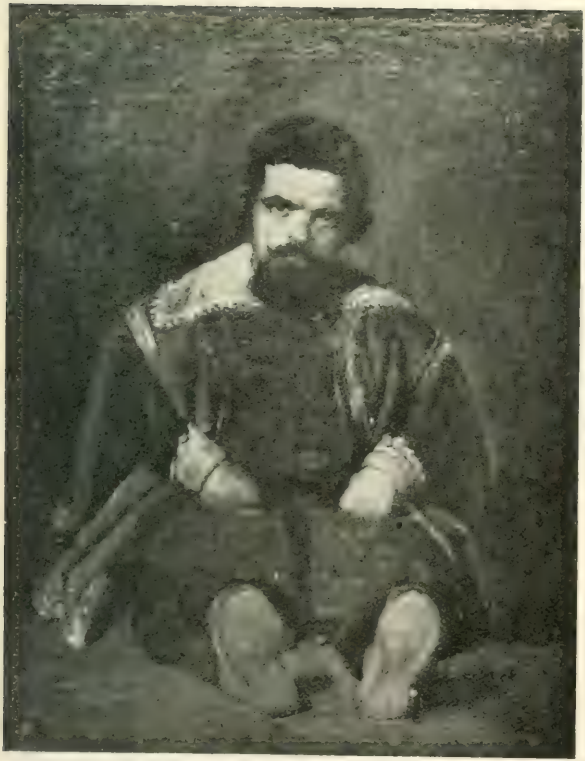
[2] The Louvre possesses a charming half-length portrait of the Infanta Margarita at the age of four or five. The harmony of this picture is so exquisitely delicate that it alone is sufficient to inspire a love of Velazquez.

able touching up,[1] and perhaps suffered a complete transformation some years after Velazquez' death. But the general harmony of the picture is such, the accord of the silvers and pinks so delicate, the lightness of the tulles so aerial, and the ornaments of the immense hoop hit off in so sprightly a manner, that these ruins of one of the master's most admirable pictures, of which nothing survives but the interpretation of a costume, are in themselves a feast for artists.

About the same period Velazquez painted his series of jesters and dwarfs, "hombres de placer," in which he reveals one of the most original sides of his genius for observation. His pictures of dwarfs, which are masterpieces of painting, might also serve as illustrations to a medical treatise. The oldest in date of these pictures, the *Geographer* of the Rouen picture gallery, (a jester pointing to a terrestrial globe), is probably the same individual as the one who is known under the name of *Pablillos de Valladolid*[2] (see p. 173). This latter shows more movement than any other

[1] Probably by Mazo.

[2] No. 1092 in the Prado. Painted about 1631.



DON SEBASTIAN DE MORRA

DON ANTONIO EL INGLES

of Velazquez' portraits; the jester is in the act of declaiming.

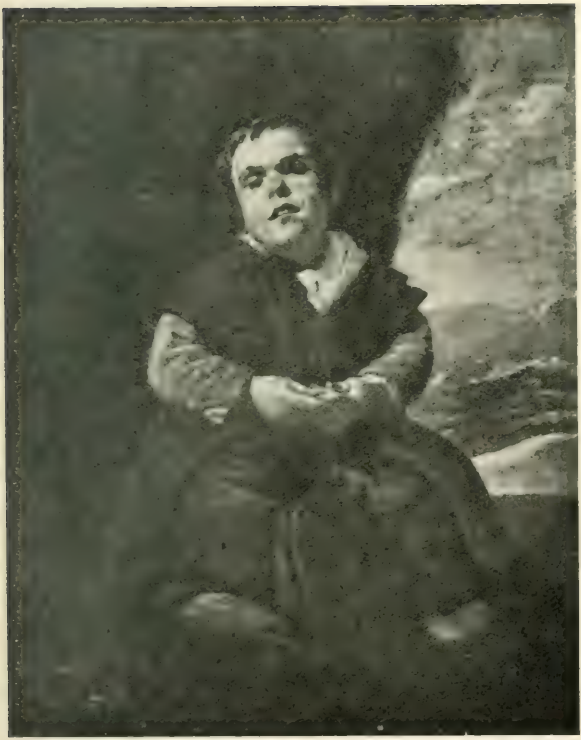
In 1644, during a stay of the Court in Aragon, Velazquez painted at Fraga the portrait of the dwarf *El Primo*[1] (see p. 177), and later on, in all the force of his talent and with all the care of which his genius was capable, he executed the portraits of *Don Sebastian de Morra*[2] (see p. 181), of *Don Antonio el Ingles*[3] (see p. 183) (an incomparable masterpiece), of the *Child of Vallecas*[4] (see p. 187), and of the *Idiot of Coria*[5] (see p. 189). To these must be added the portrait of the jester *Don Juan of Austria*[6] (see p. 193), and the two philosophers *Æsop* and *Menippus*[7] (see pp. 195 and 197). Each one of these likenesses shows Velazquez' gift of seizing what is pictorial in every object. The sight of a brilliant cavalier or of a hideous abortion arouses, it would seem,

[1] No. 1095 in the Prado.
[2] No. 1096 in the Prado.
[3] No. 1097 in the Prado.
[4] No. 1098 in the Prado.
[5] No. 1099 in the Prado.
[6] No. 1094 in the Prado.
[7] Nos. 1100 and 1101 in the Prado.

in the mind of the master nothing but associations of lines and colours, of harmonies and values. On each occasion he proves that he is a unique painter. He never lets us divine either admiration or respect or horror, or any kind of intellectual or sentimental agitation. His sensibility, which is at once so fine, so keen, and so synthetic in its expression, is entirely confined to the emotion of sight. He seems neither to think nor hear, neither to weep nor laugh. He sees.

This is not the temperament of a painter of allegories, and though he may have given the names of *Æsop* and *Menippus* to two beggars at the palace gates, there is nothing of classical antiquity in the mythological pictures which he painted at the end of his life for the Torre de la Parada and for the "Room of Mirrors" in the palace of Madrid. Indeed it seems that whenever he deals with mythology Velazquez, in spite of himself as it were, cannot help being slightly amused at the idea of treating "antique" subjects. Already the Bacchus in *Los Borrachos* is somewhat droll. In the *Mercury and Argus*[1] (see p. 201), in which an

[1] No. 1063 in the Prado.



EL NIÑO DE VALLECAS

EL TONTO DE CORIA

admirable silvery light vibrates over the canvas and gives it a character of pure beauty, we are shown a sleeping man on whom a trick has just been played. Is it some "toril" boy from whom has been stolen one of the "novillos" he is herding, or is it Argus who is being robbed of the cow Io? There is, however, not the slightest trace of anything comic in the painting; the legs are modelled in a wonderful half tone; the grey shadows are transparent. There is no irony in light.

The *Mars*[1] (see p. 203) also is a "piece" of admirable craftsmanship and great force of execution. Velazquez has given his classically posed nude study the head of a recruiting sergeant perhaps as a protest against the conventional and excessive solemnity of allegorical painting? The artist keeps it to himself. He has painted this moustachioed jowl in a somewhat enigmatical half light, perhaps in order to make us smile, perhaps because it was actually on the model's shoulders. But when he was painting the torso, the muscular arms and powerful thighs, he was

[1] No. 1102 in the Prado.

thinking only of how to render the living body in the light in which he saw it.

The *Venus at the Looking-glass* (see p. xix.), which is now in the Morritt collection at Rokeby Park, made part, with the *Argus*, of the decoration of the "Room of Mirrors." This admirable example of the female nude is the only one of the kind among Velazquez' works. Judging from photographs and from descriptions that have been made to us, the picture must be one of rare beauty. The *Venus*, however, is no more Greek than the *Mars* or the *Argus*; still less does she come from the vague and artificial regions of academic tradition. She is a Spaniard. The shoulders, which are a little square, are slight; the slim and supple waist is full of spring; the strongly developed hips remind one of the curves of Andalusian dances, in which the whole body twists and turns on sinewy legs. This curve of the body and the luminous patch it makes are the whole of the picture. There are no details to destroy or to lessen the effect. The head is turned so as to show only the outline of the cheek, and its reflection in the glass is vague; the little Cupid who is holding the mirror fades and

DON JUAN OF AUSTRIA

ÆSOP

MENIPPUS

melts into the background; the feet do not count and the hands are in shadow. Velazquez painted the beautiful body he had before him with all the clear-sighted love he knew how to put into his work.

In the presence of this fine female nude the purely pictorial character of Velazquez' artistic sensibility becomes still more apparent. If artistic sensibility is merely the faculty of entering into contact with Nature through the intermediary of our senses, it is rare indeed for an artist not to convey to us —whether innocently or not— the sensual pleasure he derives from the spectacle of Nature. Where does sensibility end and sensuality begin in the plastic arts? —A question it is both difficult and useless to answer.

Titian's *Venus recreating herself with Music* does not only reveal the Venetian master's love of beautiful lines and beautiful colours; we also feel in it the gently voluptuous emotion of music, and the body of his Venus evokes the sensual joys of the Italian Renaissance. Leonardo's enigmatic faces, with their compelling eyes and equivocal smile, draw us after them into that mysterious domain in which Da

Vinci's insatiable curiosity loved to dream. Rubens' joy bursts forth abounding and overflowing in the florid brilliance of his women's bodies. Raphael sings his passion for lovely forms. Rembrandt touches us with his tenderness. Poussin cultivates his sensuality with patient elaboration. Every artist puts into his work the reflection of the secret emotion by which he is moved. Son as he was of that ardent Spain whose sensuality Goya later on tried to express—Velazquez painted his *Venus at the Mirror* as if to convince us that in no circumstances and on no subject will he tell us more than the light tells him.

MERCURY AND ARGUS

MARS

CHAPTER IX

The *Coronation of the Virgin* and the *Hermits*—*Las Hilanderas* and *Las Meninas*—Velazquez Knight of Santiago—His journey to the Pyrenees—His death.

The Madrid gallery possesses two religious pictures which date from the latter years of the master's life. The *Coronation of the Virgin*[1] (see p. 207), a large composition executed according to traditional rules, was destined for the oratory of Queen Mariana. Its general harmony (imposed perhaps by the rest of the decoration) is very different from that of Velazquez' other pictures. The red, blue and violet dresses of the figures (who are conventionally draped) present contrasts of tone far more violent than usual. The workmanship is very similar to that of the *Mars* and the *Mercury and Argus*. The slightly violet tinge of some of the shadows, which is noticeable in these two pictures, occurs again, only more

[1] No. 1056 in the Prado.

accentuated, in the *Coronation of the Virgin*. As always, the realism of the figures is striking; the models who posed for Christ and for God the Father are extremely commonplace. The Virgin, a pretty Spaniard in a somewhat affected attitude, is drawn and painted with masterly certainty; the hands are beautifully supple; the wing-trimmed heads of the cherubim which adorn the lower part of the picture are exceedingly pretty. The usual clouds and the symbolical dove are not lacking. Velazquez shows himself an accomplished master in this picture in which he pays honour to religion and respect to tradition.

The Hermits, or *St Anthony and St Paul*[1] see p. 209, is probably the last of Velazquez' pictures. He painted it in 1659 for the Hermitage of St Anthony of Buen Retiro. This picture, the arrangement of which reminds us of some of the early masters, is painted with great lightness and with that delicacy which Velazquez knew how to put into the aerial backgrounds of his landscapes where everything is steeped in light and air. The old men and the plants in the foreground,

[1] No. 1057 in the Prado.

CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN

THE HERMITS

the birch tree whose trunk is covered with ivy, are painted with that sureness of observation and that breadth of touch which distinguish Velazquez even in his smallest works.

There remains for us to speak of the master's two most characteristic compositions, *Las Hilanderas* and *Las Meniñas*. These two pictures were painted in the latter years of his life. *Las Hilanderas*, or *The Spinners*[1] (see p. 213), represents the interior of one of those tapestry workshops which Velazquez had so many opportunities of inspecting in the exercise of his Court functions. This great canvas was certainly painted on the spot and in the actual light which floods the scene. In the foreground is a workroom where reigns a luminous semi-darkness and in which the spinners are at work; in the background and brightly lighted by a side window invisible to the spectator, is a large room in which some ladies are looking at a piece of tapestry. The picture, which is admirably executed and in which one feels that Velazquez has concentrated all his powers of observation, is richer in colouring than some of the master's other

[1] No. 1061 in the Prado.

works. The young work-girl who is winding a skein in the foreground—her neck moist with perspiration, her arm quivering, and her bust full and supple in the loose chemise—is a "piece" of painting of prodigious life. The tapestry in the background and the visitors irradiated with light give the actual sensation of daylight entering an apartment, and of the vibration of luminous rays.

If we possessed nothing but the picture of *Las Hilanderas,* we should never tire of admiring in it Velazquez' art, the manner in which he surprises the most fugitive shades and the most elusive movements, not only of the beings he paints, but of all that surrounds them, and the certainty and simplicity with which he expresses what he sees. . . . In spite, however, of all the breathing originality of the arrangement of the picture, a few of the attitudes and the very richness of the colouring remind us of some of the compositions of the Venetian painters; in spite of the incomparable certainty of execution, in spite of the overwhelming mastery which makes every portion of the canvas an object of astonishment and admiration for lovers of painting, the visitor to the Prado sometimes

THE SPINNERS

catches himself thinking that *Las Hilanderas* must have lost a little by darkening,[1] and that this masterpiece is still not all that Velazquez could express in this direction. The spectator who thinks thus, the amateur who unconsciously formulates these hesitations which are not even vague criticisms, hardly even reservations, is not a newcomer. The first visit to the *Spinners* is wholly one of admiration; not till one has entered the adjoining room, not till one has seen *Las Meninas* is it permissible to breathe to oneself that *Las Hilanderas* is not the highest summit of Velazquez' art.

Las Meninas[2] (see p. 217) is not a picture, but a room in the palace, in which we see the Infanta Margarita, aged five or six years old, accompanied by her two "meniñas" or maids of honour, Doña Agustina Sarmiento and Doña Isabel de Velasco. The female dwarf Mari Barbola, the hydrocephalous Nicolasico Pertusato and an enormous dog are also present. Velazquez is in the act of

[1] *Las Hilanderas* was damaged by the fire of 1734. It has been repaired and the restorations have spoiled it a little.

[2] No. 1062 in the Prado.

painting[1] and one perceives the reflections of the King and Queen in a looking-glass. At the back of the room Doña Marcela de Ulloa, a lady-in-waiting, is talking to a "guarda-damas"; and Don Jose Nieto, the Queen's "aposentador," is going out by a door that leads into a brightly lighted passage. The figures are doing nothing, or rather it is obvious that they have been taken unawares, as they might have been by Philip IV., had Philip IV. had a kodak. . . . But where is an apparatus gifted with sensibility which could give such results? Whence come the marvellous harmony, the sensation of supreme artistic joy that emanates from this picture, which is composed with no regard to any rule of composition, and in which a large strip of the foreground is entirely occupied by the back of a painter's canvas? Why does the ceiling, a plain grey ceiling, give us such acute pleasure? What is the mysterious secret of

[1] One wonders whether the vivid light on Velazquez' left sleeve has not been touched up; it is the only point in the picture the "value" of which is something of a shock. It certainly lessens the effect of Doña Agustina Sarmiento's head.

LAS MENIÑAS

this art which seems to imitate Nature to the point of illusion and which nevertheless is constantly choosing?[1] How was Velazquez able to fill a canvas with air to this extent, and to suffuse with silvery radiance the panelled door in the background? By what witchcraft does the filmy hair of the little Infanta pass into the undulations of the atmosphere? What is it makes a living, breathing creature of the charming young girl kneeling, with her profile turned, beside the little

[1] *Las Meninas*, triumph of realism as it is, is at the same time the finest example of that "choice" which is at the bottom of Velazquez' art, and which we might discuss in every one of the master's pictures. All art implies a choice—conscious or not. The harmony, the supreme distinction of Velazquez' masterpieces consist as much in what he omits as in what he says. In his music—in all music, the silences are as important as the notes. If we could see the real room and the real Meniñas, we should probably be much surprised. The mistake of imitators and "pastiche" makers comes from ignorance or misconception of this inward side of art. They try to imitate what Velazquez painted and have no suspicions of what he did *not* paint nor of the profound and individual reasons for his choice.

princess, who looks as if she had stepped out of a fairy tale, in her dress of silver, red and pink. Let us go nearer. . . . We know that a picture should not be looked at too near, but in spite of what we know we stand confounded. There seems to be *nothing*. The eye of the kneeling girl is a smear of bistre; slashes of bistre cover everything; the fingers —the fingers of those hands which are actually alive—are dabs of paint without form or definition. The shadow of the bodice on the kneeling girl's skirt, that wonderfully transparent shadow, is so brutally opaque that it is disconcerting. Where is the dress of the fairy princess? Little Pertusato is not drawn but made away with. What induced us to think he was dressed in red, black and silver? . . . The dog is more coarsely painted than a scene decoration. . . .

Stand back a few yards; again, the whole thing becomes instinct with life; the smears of bistre are eyes that look; the brown slashes are delicate little hands; all the figures, surprised in the attitude of the moment and turning towards the spectator who attracts their attention, are in their proper places

LAS MENIÑAS (DETAIL)

in the living depths of this extraordinary picture.

Discussions as to the genesis of this masterpiece appear to us superfluous, and explanations of the manner in which the result was obtained vain. The picture is there, and painted with disconcerting simplicity. The whole thing is dashed off with spirit, and we know not what quality to admire most in this consummate masterpiece, which is at the same time a sort of huge sketch, but a sketch which is built up with astonishing correctness, to which seemingly it would have been impossible to add anything without spoiling it, and which Velazquez had the genius to leave as it is.

The cross of the Order of Santiago which decorates Velazquez' doublet in *Las Meniñas* was added after the artist's death by the King's desire. The "habit of Santiago" had been granted to Velazquez by a royal order on June 12th, 1658. There followed a long and minute inquiry which lasted several months, in the course of which more than a hundred witnesses gave evidence, and Velazquez himself had to prove that he had never exercised

the profession of painter nor sold a picture, and that he had practised his art only for his own pleasure and in obedience to the King, etc. . . .

Notwithstanding the unanimity of the evidence to this effect, the members of the council on February 26th, 1659, brought in a report in which they "approved his age, purity of blood and lineage, but disapproved the nobility of his paternal and maternal ancestors." Velazquez in vain produced a document proving that his parents had been exempt from a tax not payable by nobles, an unfavourable decree was passed by the council and the King had to solicit from Pope Alexander VI. a dispensation for defective nobility. The brief was despatched by the Pope on October 7th, 1659; after several further formalities, and after the King had signed the following order: "As King and natural lord, recognising no temporal superior, I, of my own initiative, infallible wisdom and royal and absolute power, create the said Diego de Silva 'hijo dalgo'"[1] — then and not till then, the "habit of Santiago" was

[1] Quoted from M. de Beruete's work.

LAS MENIÑAS (DETAIL)

VP

presented to Velazquez on November 27th, 1659.

The year after (April 8th, 1660), Velazquez, as Grand Marshal of the Court, left Madrid for Irun. He was entrusted with the preparations for the festivities which were to take place in the Isle of Pheasants on the occasion of the signing of the Treaty of the Pyrenees and the marriage of Louis XIV. with the Infanta Maria Teresa. At the Royal wedding, relates Palomino, Velazquez "was by no means the least eager to array his person carefully and magnificently." But he was worn out on his return from this journey, during which he overworked himself. On July 31st, he was obliged to take to his bed; the doctor's diagnosis was "a subtle syncopal tertian fever." . . . On August 6th, 1660, at two o'clock in the afternoon, Velazquez died after receiving the sacraments of the Church. He was sixty-one years old.

The King was much afflicted by the death of his painter. In the margin of the report of the Junta of the "Obras y Bosques," resolving that the sum of a thousand ducats drawn by Velazquez as superintendent of the works at

the Alcazar should return to the Junta, Philip IV. wrote in a trembling hand, "I am broken down." [1]

This is not the place to discuss in detail the liquidation of the master's accounts, which showed a considerable deficit on his death. His son-in-law and pupil, Juan Bautista del Mazo, succeeded him as painter to the King.[2]

Velazquez' biographers unanimously deplore the artist's situation at the Court of Spain which forced upon him occupations uncongenial to his talent. They regret his post of Palace Marshal, which prevented the painter from producing as much as might have been expected, and obliged him to expend himself in fatiguing business of all sorts. We must not, however, forget that it was Velazquez himself who solicited this post and who did his utmost to obtain it, remarking in his petition that the situation suited his requirements, "su genio y ocupacion." People who judge the position of great artists of olden days

[1] "Quedo adbatido."

[2] Mazo with Careño de Miranda was Velazquez' best pupil. Many canvases which sometimes pass as Velazquez' are by Mazo.

according to present ideas are liable to make mistakes. As regards Velazquez in particular, all suppositions are hazardous. Never was artist more discreet and reserved as to his own personal affairs. Where others thrust themselves forward he goes into hiding. He has scarce painted a portrait of himself and has left us not one of any member of his family.[1] Gifted as he was with the most marvellous facility — his finest pictures are painted at a single spurt — Velazquez produced little. The reason for this lay not only in his Court functions: in 1628 Madrid had been visited by an artist whom neither his diplomatic affairs nor the gout prevented from painting more in nine months than Velazquez in several years. The "phlegmatic" disposition to which Philip IV. alludes in his letter to the Duke del Infantado, was indeed one of the characteristics of the painter, who was remarkable at the Court, among so many others, for his greater distinction and gravity ("mayor punto y gravedad," says his friend Mantilla), as well as for

[1] We do not know who is represented in the fine woman's portrait in the Wallace Collection, which is so penetrating in its realism.

his brilliancy and deportment ("lucimiento y porte").

This extraordinary artist painted most of his masterpieces "by order of the King." He does not seem to have been tormented by the need of painting. Rubens had already remarked his "modesty." Nothing in Velazquez' works shows his inmost preferences and tastes. He is the least intrusive of artists and he never seeks to astonish. When he has to paint a religious picture he follows the traditional rules of religious painting; in his portraits he goes so far as to make use of his predecessors' canvases; he does not seek originality in his subject, but he sees as no one has ever seen before or since. Such is the apparent simplicity of his masterpieces that we do not at first perceive all the art implied by this simplicity. Velazquez paints what he sees, but he chooses what pleases him in what he sees, and knows exactly what it is he can attempt to render. This is one of the secrets of his genius.

This painter of light, this photographer, if we take the word in its etymological meaning, is perhaps of all artists the one who has the

most marked individuality. Placed in the midst of a society more formal, rigid and artificial than any that has ever existed, this placid Spaniard felt the secret of the living beauty of Nature. He was a wonderful eye open in a country of light.

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(*The titles of Pictures by Velazquez are printed in italics*)